

PROPHETIC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ENCOURAGING MALES IN ST. PAUL
CHURCH AND THE MAYSVILLE AREA TO UNDERSTAND
BETTER SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

PROPHETIC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ENCOURAGING MALES IN ST. PAUL CHURCH AND THE MAYSVILLE AREA TO UNDERSTAND BETTER SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

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St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church is located in the Maysville community of Mobile, Alabama, which has dire socio-economic problems. This study hypothesized that, by organizing males in accordance with Nehemiah 4:6, and Philippians 2:5, they would become active in the church and community. The project sought to accomplish this by holding a men's revival, a community meeting, and several Bible studies, and by mentoring boys and disciplining men. Mixed methodology and triangulated data from evaluations, surveys, and interviews reveal that the project produced an awareness of civic engagement and the need for leaders who possess the consciousness of the Old Testament prophets.

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DEDICATION

During my time at United Theological Seminary, I have had my second son, quit a job to go into full-time into the ministry, relocated, and much more. The one constant throughout this most unstable time in my life has been my family. My sons Robert Richard Allen Turner II and Malcolm Robert Martin Turner are my pride, joy and legacy. My loving, devoted, understanding, and supportive wife Sheretta Turner is exactly what I need and more. I dedicate this project and degree to you. In addition, I dedicate this book to the memory of my grandmother, who had only a 7th grade education and who died during the writing of this project. Her life is a lesson in perseverance, faith, and an unquenchable desire to serve to the Lord. Susie T. Jones, I will always love and remember you.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.M.E.	African Methodist Episcopal
ESV	English Standard Version
FAMU	Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University
NKJV	New King James Version
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
SGA	Student Government Association
CELAM	Coordinating Committee of Latin American Episcopal Council
TARP	Troubled Asset Relief Program
UA	The University of Alabama

INTRODUCTION

When President Jimmy Carter was elected president in 1976 of the United States, he made history. President Carter was the first president “to openly talk about being a born-again Christian.”¹ Carter, a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher, spoke passionately about his faith. He created a term that was short-lived politically called “progressive evangelism.”² The reason it was short-lived is because, in 1980, Jerry Falwell teamed up with Ronald Reagan and, with the help of the Republican Party establishment, formed what is known as the Religious Right or Moral Majority, which undermined progressive evangelism. The Religious Right was catapulted into fame by the Reagan campaign’s use of the Southern Strategy. When this occurred, many Southern white, devout Christians began to feel more at home within the Republican Party. As a result, Democrats abandoned their nationwide strategy of appealing to voters based on their religious convictions; instead, they appealed to the voters’ sense of fairness and economic well-being. Consequently, Democrats spoke less about their spiritual convictions, and Republicans began to label them as secularist whose god is the

¹ Greg Garrison, “Jimmy Carter Deserves Credit – ‘He Vanquished George Wallace,’ Historian Randall Balmer Says,” AL.com, accessed October 3, 2013, http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2013/10/jimmy_carter_deserves_credit_.html#incart_m-rpt-2.

² Ibid.

government. Hence, they began to pull funding strategically from national races in the South and concentrated, instead, on the West and East coasts.

Today, unfortunately, it seems that one political party feels it has a monopoly on Christian values and chooses to label anyone not like them as a radical. African Americans, who primarily identify themselves as progressives on fiscal matters but theologically and socially conservative, struggle to fit well within either party and have, in recent years, backed away from their civic engagement. At the moment, many predominately African American congregations focus on building themselves up and have turned their emphasis away from social action based in a social gospel. Espoused theology now tends to be exclusively an individual-centered one. With no direct spiritually-based public participation or activism, vast areas in the African American community have turned to ruins; and our children's minds have been captivated by a culture of individualism, where they see no real relevance or efficacy of any institution, including among others: the organized church; national, state or local governments; or national social or para-church organizations. Hence, my project seeks to address this perilous predicament through the context of St. Paul A.M.E. Church, located in the Maysville area of Mobile, Alabama, at which I am the pastor. I attempted through this project to provide tools for redressing the above-stated dilemma by educating and organizing males such that they would become socially active in the church and community

Two scriptures serve as a guiding light for my initiative: Neh. 4:6 and Phil. 2:5 (NKJV).³ The text in Nehemiah refers to what the scribe and administrator Nehemiah did in responding to the dismal condition of the city of Jerusalem. Seeking to disciple men and mentor young boys to be more civically engaged in their community in the mold of the 8th century Old Testament prophets shall be my utmost aim. I coin a phrase that I believe best describes this exercise: “Prophetic Civic Engagement.” I define it to be faith-based civic engagement with social justice, as well as theologically and socially conservative goals, in mind that are consistent with the thought and actions of the biblical prophets.

Chapter One gives extensive background on who I am and how I developed a passion for prophetic civic engagement. It goes into detail about the context of my ministry. Chapter Two is where I demonstrate my comprehension of this context and its problems. Here, the reader will find an examination of the literature that I encountered during my research. Both agreements and disagreements are reached in regard to the several books that I read. I discuss additionally their relevance to the project.

In Chapter Three, one can discover the theoretical foundation for prophetic civic engagement. Three primary foundations are laid: theological, biblical, and historical. Chapter Four is the location of my discussions of the methodology and design of the model used in the field experience. It is here explained which methodology is chosen, and the outline of my research method is given.

³ All biblical citations are to the NKJV, unless otherwise indicated. Thus, references to the NKJV will not be indicated.

In Chapter Five, the reader finds the documentation of the field experience. One will see documentation of the class lesson plans, implemented timelines, surveys, and the like. Likewise, this chapter explains the results of the data and presents a discussion of the analysis. Chapter Six is the final chapter of the thesis and will contain my reflections regarding the field experience. More importantly, the reader is presented with a modified model for encouraging prophetic civic engagement in light of my discoveries through the field experience, along with suggestions for what should be done differently if this exercise were to be done again.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Who Am I

Although the term is relatively new and unfamiliar, the work of prophetic civic engagement has been seen throughout history, especially within the African American community. Born and raised in historic Tuskegee, Alabama, on the campus of Tuskegee University, I knew firsthand the brilliance of African American people, the depth of their activism, and the horrific consequences of racism and classism. As a child, it was common place to hear stories of famed figures such as Booker T. Washington, who founded Tuskegee Institute; George Washington Carver, scientist, community activist and philanthropist; the Tuskegee Airmen, black United States Air Force pilots who flew in World War I; Rosa Parks, a civil rights pioneer who was born in Tuskegee; Fred Gray, her attorney, who took on civil rights cases, such as *Gomillion v. Lightfoot*,¹ and wicked acts of racism, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, and many more. These local historical icons and events with international prominence, as well as many other black

¹ *Gomillion v. Lightfoot*, 364 U.S. 339 (1960), which held that the creation of an electoral district that served to disenfranchise black voters was unconstitutional under the Fifteenth Amendment.

heroines, serve as both standard-bearers and clarion callers, from whom I glean from and am motivated to this day. I see myself as having something in common with all of these historical figures. Each prominent person in Tuskegee about whom I was educated came from very humble beginnings and was able to challenge, with an indomitable spirit, the racist, classist, and sexist status quo of their day. As a result of their prophetic role in society, all of them, with perseverance and a strong faith in God, achieved greatness and recognition, not merely for themselves, but also for an entire nation or people. These civil rights pioneers have all displayed models of leadership that I intended, through this project and with God as my helper, to harness in order to create both an approach to community activism and a social uplift in my community. From them, I learned that the main ingredient needed for societal transformation is persistent initiative that is grounded in a biblical mandate.

Family Upbringing

Two factors have shaped me substantially—church and politics. Naturally, I had no choice as to what denomination I would belong, growing up in a family where both parents are lifelong members of the A.M.E. Church. My father, Robert, loves politics: at Tuskegee University, he majored in political science and is a former elected official. My father would always take me along whenever he had to go to either a church or political function. Due to these early life interactions (beginning at birth with the church and age six with politics), a strong desire was forged in me to be intricately involved in these two distinct, but supportive, spheres of American culture. I acquired an understanding and appreciation of the complex and fragile relationship the church and government have with one another, especially in the South. Consequently, these were both strong and

intertwined influences in my life and became the main two activities in which I have been most rigorously involved throughout my life.

My father has had an enormous impact on my life in other ways, as well. He is a retired insurance salesman, church lay leader, steward pro-tem, church treasurer, class leader, and political organizer (in addition to being a former elected official), and is known throughout the community as a man who has a sincere love for the Lord and may speak as a pundit on church matters. Furthermore, my father also is madly in love with the A.M.E. Church. A sign of his devotion is seen in my very name. When I was born, my dad chose to not name me, his only son, completely after himself. Instead, he named me after the founder of the A.M.E. Church, Richard Allen, out of fidelity to the denomination. Hence, my full name is Robert Richard Allen Turner.

It was by traveling with my father that I first gained a greater appreciation for the poor and distressed. I witnessed how the severely indigent lived. I did not grow up rich in any stretch of the imagination, but, as I saw how meager the extremely poor lived in rural Alabama, I became more thankful for what I did possess. Additionally, during these trips, my father would give me what amounted to my first open and frank lessons on Christianity, politics, geography, and social activism. My father played a tremendous role in the formative years of my life, which laid the foundation for my later ministry and this doctoral project.

Early Evidence of Calling

I saw the first evidence of my calling appeared while I was SGA president at UA, during a student body event where the choir from FAMU came to sing. The spirit was

extremely high and I, being led by the Holy Spirit, encouraged the entire student body to let the Lord have the Lord's way. The students erupted into a powerful praise for God. Later, my teacher, who was also a pastor, spoke to me about spiritual gifts and what he saw in me on that day. During that same school year, I was invited to be a youth speaker for a church program. After I concluded my speech/sermon, over 16 people gave their lives to Christ and/or rededicated them. Following this, the pastor prophetically said, "If this is not a sign that you are called to preach, I don't know what is."

Young Adult Activism

I have always been involved in civics, be it working with my father or on my own. I was elected as president of my student body in high school. Even though I did not intend to be politically active in college, events such as racist practices against myself and others prompted me to confront the administration and the Machine, an organization modeled after Yale University's Skull and Bones, consisting of predominately white fraternities and sororities, whose goal is to control campus politics. The heritage embedded in me by Tuskegee and my father would not allow me to stand idly by and watch inequality and corruption run rampant at a school I loved so dearly.

As a student, I, therefore, collaborated with righteous-seeking whites, Hispanics, and blacks. Together, we challenged the Machine, formed our own political organizations, gained power, led marches, held protest rallies, and convened meetings with the president of the University and other administrators. It was my goal that if I could not destroy the Machine that I was going to put a huge irreparable dent in it. While I was there, a group of black females tried to rush several sororities, and, even though

unsuccessful, it brought more attention to the racist practices of the Machine. I wrote editorials in the campus newspaper speaking out against the racist, classist and sexist practices of the Machine that the administration allowed to occur on campus without holding any major investigations. Most importantly to me, I wanted to correct an ancient injustice perpetrated on campus: two slaves, named only Jack and Boysie, were buried on UA grounds in unmarked graves. Now, due to God's call on me to activism, they have a marker on their graves, and several students and I gave them a proper funeral. The other significant thing that we accomplished was to demand that the President of UA renovate Foster Auditorium and create a multi-cultural building, which, indeed, came to fruition.

Due to this prominent campus activism, I was featured on several local news stations, as well as on CNN's "NewsNight with Aaron Brown" when the University of Alabama's faculty senate issued its apology for slavery. There were other positives that came from my civic engagement. Making history within the SGA, I was appointed as its first black chief of staff. In the Blackburn Institute, I was elected as its first black male chair. Additionally, I was the first black president of UA College Democrats. The Alumni Association selected me as the "Most Outstanding Student," and I received a host of other awards from the black faculty and staff and several other organizations.

There were also, however, negative consequences due to my activism. For instance, I was not invited to join certain prestigious, exclusive student organizations that were dominated by the Machine. On several occasions I was called a "nigger." Additionally, even the NAACP, in which I was very active, had the words "I hate niggers" taped to its door. Nonetheless, the benefits far outweighed any adversity that I experienced.

Heeding the Call

Later, I attended law school, but once I submitted to the call of God after years of running; I withdrew to be a missionary in Kenya. While in Kenya, the decision to leave law school and forego secular ambitions in order to fulfill God's plan for my life was confirmed by the many miracles I witnessed and acts of kindness received from the Kenyans. I proposed, upon returning home, to the love of my life, Sheretta on my twenty-third birthday in July. Later, in October a few weeks after Hurricane Katrina, I went to New Orleans to aid and comfort the people who had just lost everything. In December of that year, I purchased my first house and married Sheretta. Together, we have two boys Robert Richard Allen Turner II, also known as Deuce, and Malcolm Robert Martin Turner, also known as Bobby.

All of the above events, both pleasant and unpleasant, have impacted me in a host of ways. The negative experiences have taught me two fundamental ideas: (1) how depraved humanity, indeed, is; and (2) the need all have for Jesus Christ to be one's personal lord and savior. This latter concept has provided my ministry with a constant source of energy. The positive experiences have confirmed for me also two ideas: (1) that, while prophetic civic engagement is not easy, it is well worth it; and (2) regardless of how lonely the journey seems, God is with me and God's plan for my life will be done.

Conclusion of Who I Am

In response to the comprehensive nature of my life experiences I am very socially conscious. Intellectually, I always know that I need to learn more. As a man, my parents raised me to see my duty as standing up for what I believe in my heart to be right. As a

pastor, I am known for loving the members, consistently relating Scriptures to contemporary social contextual dilemmas, and giving solutions derived from biblical prescriptions. Due to my personal identity, heritage, upbringing, and experience, my choice of a ministry area that focuses on civic engagement is apparent and I feel uniquely qualified to create a model of ministry for community involvement that is based in biblical prophetic action and biblical administrative models.

In my view, it is imperative for local congregations to be in tune with their individual local community and abreast of both their community's history and the developing current situation. My urgency was driven by experiences undergone as a child riding with my father, and my time spent as a student activist where I plainly saw the void in the communities that can best be filled by moral agents possessed with the Holy Spirit and whose only fear is God. This model has had a transformational impact on my ministry and, hopefully, will have one on successive generations. Prayerfully, I hope and expect this project and ministry will live long after I do. I hope additionally that it is meaningful for my community for ages to come and that God's name will be praised throughout it all. With that being said, now let us delve into the contextual analysis of St. Paul A.M.E. Church.

Context of the Model

The context for my ministry is Saint Paul A. M. E. Church located in the Maysville area of Mobile, Alabama. It is the third church I have pastored. I was appointed as their pastor on October 8, 2011.

The State of Alabama

The former epicenter of the civil rights movement, Alabama is a southern state consisting of approximately four and one-half million people. It is a place with a rich history, especially in regards to race relations and African American achievement.

Alabama is where the first White House of the Confederacy was located and where Confederate president Jefferson Davis took his oath of office.² Needless to say, Alabama fought diligently, yet futilely, in the Civil War on the losing side of the Confederacy. It is also the state where the Selma to Montgomery march took place. Yet, many Alabamians still nostalgically remember these times of slavery and racial intolerance and long for the “good ole days.”

Some Alabamians, on the other hand, like to keep the past behind them in their attempt to be a stronger competitor for prosperous companies to come to Alabama. Being home to more navigable waterways than any other state in the country, as well as possessing a low paid, “right-to-work” labor force, has enabled Alabama to obtain many international corporations in recent years. For example, Mercedes Benz, Boeing, Mitsubishi Material, Sony, Airbus, Hyundai and a host of other major companies have made Alabama an indispensable extension of their global corporations.

Background of the City of Mobile

Unlike most Alabama cities, Mobile prides itself on its absence in the historical annals of the civil rights movement. During that era, many in Mobile believed they did not have the same problems with racism as other places and considered riots, marches,

² “First White House of the Confederacy – Montgomery, Alabama,” ExploreSouthernHistory.com, accessed March 28, 2014, <http://www.exploresouthernhistory.com/firstwhitehouse.html>.

sit-ins or boycotts unnecessary. Indeed, it is a commonly-known, but shameful, truth that during the struggle for civil rights, the African American leaders told the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to get back on the plane because they did not need him in Mobile. Mobilians see themselves as different from others in the rest of Alabama. Several factors contribute to this notion.

The city is located thirty-one miles from the Gulf of Mexico. It is closer to Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana than it is to the central mainland part of Alabama, where I was raised. Mobile is the state's oldest city, being taken in 1702 by the French from the Mauvilla Indians, the municipality's namesake.³ Mobile was the first capital of French Louisiana.⁴ It was not until 1813 when the United States first began to obtain Mobile.⁵ The Confederate's Navy used the city extensively and primarily during the Civil War.⁶ As a port city, cotton was the major export until the 20th century; around that time, Mobile commenced to become a valuable hub for the area's industrial development.⁷ A festive cultural fact Mobilians love to exclaim is that the Mardi Gras celebration originated in Mobile and not New Orleans.⁸ One should note, however, that, hypocritically for a city who boasts not having a great racial problem, Mobile continues

³ Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, "History," *Mobile Bay: On the Water, On The Move*, accessed January 18, 2012, <http://www.mobilechamber.com/history.asp>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Daniel S. Margolies, "Confederate Navy in Alabama," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1804>.

⁷ Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, "History."

⁸ Ibid.

to have segregated Mardi Gras balls and royal courts based on race. Finally, Mobile is also the place where the last slave ship, the *Clotilde*, arrived in America.⁹

The Demographics of Mobile

With a population of 195,111 strictly within the city limits, not counting the large metro area, Mobile is the third largest in the state of Alabama; and, unlike the state's largest city Birmingham, Mobile has a larger percentage of whites who remain within the city limits. If the entire sixty-mile Bay area population were counted (the counties of Mobile, Baldwin, and Washington), it would equal 1.2 million people.¹⁰ Moreover, it has, as recently as 2005, elected its first black mayor, whose campaign I worked on before moving to the area as pastor of St. Paul.

The Mobile Bay area has a median age of 37 years old. Over half of the population is in the labor force. In Mobile, the majority of the employed work in the retail industry, with manufacturing coming in second. The unemployment rate is 9.4%, which is above both the nation and state's average.¹¹ The average hourly wage for Mobile County is \$18.68.¹²

⁹ Sylviane A. Diouf, *Dreams of Africa in Alabamba: The Slave Ship Clotild and the Story of the Last Africans Brought to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ United States Census Bureau, "Mobile: Quick Facts from the US Census Bureau," accessed January 19, 2012, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/01/0150000.html>

¹¹ Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, "Workforce," *Mobile Bay: On the Water, On the Move*, accessed January 20, 2012, <http://www.mobilebayregion.com/workforce.asp>.

¹² "Alabama Average Hourly Wage," *Annual 2010 Alabama Department of Industrial Relations Labor Market Information Division*, accessed on December 31, 2011, <http://www2.dir.state.al.us/cew/AHEbyCNTY.pdf>.

According to the 2010 U. S. Census, Mobile has a very young population, with only 13.7% over the age of 65.¹³ Along with a 50.6% black population, African Americans also own 25.2% of the city's businesses; 58.4% of the population owns their home; and the median home value is \$113,300. Nonetheless nearly a quarter, 21.8% still live in poverty, and 41.6% of the citizens do not own their own home.

The black community in Mobile is large and diverse. It ranges from those possessing their doctorates to people with no high school diploma. The majority of the African American community lives in highly concentrated areas. There is, however, a strong contingent of black middle-class households who live in the suburbs. Politically, the black community does not adequately wield its voice in elections. Blacks are not the majority on any governing boards in the city. Moreover, African Americans who are in power do not utilize it as well as they should. Embarrassingly, the areas outside of the predominantly black communities are much more prosperous, with better schools and a lower crime rate.

The economy of Mobile is stable and steadily growing with good paying jobs. Due to a low cost of living, many Mobilians live comfortably off a median income of \$36,168 a year and a per capita income of \$22,141 a year. By reason of being a port city, Mobile seems to have companies who are regularly hiring primarily at the shipyard, paying their employees good wages. The port is the ninth largest in the country and is busy year round and products come in from all over the world and go out likewise. The

¹³ All the information in this paragraph may be found in United States Census Bureau.

major industries for Mobile are “chemical, pulp and paper, aerospace, shipbuilding and repair, wood products and the high tech industry.”¹⁴

Mobile has a very lucrative oil and gas industry that pumps resources out of the fertile ground and shoreline of the city. As a result of the world’s obsessive reliance upon nonrenewable energies, these jobs pay extremely well and are very stable. There are, however, costs to such production. For example, British Petroleum had a massive oil leak in which 4.9 million barrels of oil leaked into the Gulf of Mexico, making it the largest oil spill in history.¹⁵ This oil leak devastated the Gulf Coast Region including Mobile.

History of St. Paul A.M.E. Church

The history of my context is gloriously inspiring. The founding members of St. Paul came out of Bethel A.M.E. Church, the largest A.M.E. church in the entire district. Near the 1890s, a select group of A.M.E families who resided in the Maysville community of Mobile grew tired of walking “Down the Bay” to go worship.¹⁶ They, therefore, banded together and asked their pastor whether they might meet once a month with him in Maysville. Being very amenable, the pastor sent them to the Annual Conference with a petition to form a new congregation. Though reluctant to depart from the old church, they thought it necessary for the growth of the denomination that there be a church planted in the Maysville community. Hence, a new church was formed. The

¹⁴ Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, “*Alabama at a Glance*,” accessed January 19, 2012, <http://www.mobilechamber.com/alabamaataglance.asp>.

¹⁵ Jeremy Repanich, “The Deepwater Horizon Spill by the Numbers,” *Popular Mechanics* accessed December 29, 2011, <http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/energy/coal-oil-gas/bp-oil-spill-statistics>.

¹⁶ The history related in this section is recounted from St. Paul A.M.E. Church, *Anniversary Bulletin* (Mobile, AL: St. Paul A.M.E. Church, 2011).

original name of St. Paul was the Maysville Circuit, and it later became known as the St. Paul Mission.

By the twentieth century, the organized members had obtained some land and erected a small place of worship on Canal Street. St. Paul grew very slowly. By 1917, the church membership was 50. Regrettably, the building on Canal St. was destroyed by fire. The young congregation experienced some growing pains until they could build a new larger sanctuary. They finally got reorganized, but, in 1926, a hurricane destroyed their newly constructed building. Being a God-fearing body of people, however, they persevered. In two years' time, they had purchased property on Midway and Weinacker Avenues. Their new place of worship was complete in 1928, and they began having worship services there.

In 1957, the church renovated its building; and, in the 1970s, the church wanted to build a new sanctuary on Weinacker Avenue. St. Paul's plans changed when a predominately white Assemblies of God congregation put their church buildings at 1251–1255 Montrose Street up for sale. These were adjacent to a major corridor in Mobile: Michigan Avenue. In December 1973, the trustees of St. Paul purchased the property. In July 1974, led by their pastor Rev. A. T. Days, the members of St. Paul triumphantly marched over from Weinacker Avenue to their new home on Montrose Street. In 2008, the name of Montrose Street was changed to Rev. A. T. Days Street.

The Demographics of St. Paul

Currently, the membership of St. Paul is 366.¹⁷ Roughly half of that number attends church services on a regular basis. Since I have been there, we have gained over 50 members. Approximately 60% of the regular attending members are retired senior citizens, living on a fixed income; only 27% of the members are married. Children make up 25%, while working adults consist of around 15%. Men constitute about 40% of the church, while women are 60%. Seventy percent of the parishioners do not have a college degree, but 55% have graduated from high school. As far as the socio-economics of the congregation are concerned, the membership is primarily lower- to middle-class. Sadly, virtually everyone in the church has someone in the family who is or has been incarcerated. Politically, they are moderately theologically and socially conservative but fiscally liberal.

Current State of St. Paul

St. Paul A.M.E. Church has a myriad of organizations, such as the Stewards, Trustees and Stewardess Boards. In recent years, some have become inactive. The Young People's Division and the Women's Missionary Society are still functioning. Furthermore, St. Paul has two women ministerial organizations called the Women's Missionary Society and the Women's Progressive Board. The church has multiple choirs and usher boards.

Christian education is a cornerstone for St. Paul. The Sunday school is vibrant with beginner, intermediate, men and women's classes. The church school is also

¹⁷ The demographic information related in this section is recounted from St. Paul A.M.E. Church, *Church Membership Survey 2013* (Mobile, AL: St. Paul A.M.E. Church, 2013).

responsible for Children's Church. They have the babies, children, and adolescents all divided up into their own class. Bible study, which is held every Wednesday, prayer meeting, and church school meetings, all draw big crowds as I teach from preselected topics.

Challenges for St. Paul

To my dismay, the negatives of St. Paul were at least equal or greater to its positives. The men are 40% of the church population. Sadly, when I arrived, St. Paul had no men's ministry. Compounding the problem is the number of young boys in the church and the surrounding community who have no father and need male role models. Another gloomy statistic for St. Paul was that it had no social action, foundation or community involvement committee. Consequently, there was no one to serve as a vanguard for the church and to inform it of critical policies that might affect congregants. The physical grounds of the church were in severe need of repair. Suffering from decades of neglect and shoddy repair work, St. Paul's physical structure needed to be mended and renovated. Lastly, due to disagreements with past pastoral administrations, the membership and income had been in steady decline for years. St. Paul had barely been able to pay its budget and staff.

Because of the above and more, the church greeted my family and me with much excitement and anticipated great success from their young pastor. Yet, in order for my tenure to be successful, I felt it paramount that the project of civic engagement be implemented successfully. I also found a need to organize the men into their own organization so that they could do ministries that were relevant and effective for the

church, the community, and themselves. One most efficient method, as I saw it, was to merge both my experiences and skills with the current needs and circumstances of St. Paul and the Maysville community. It was also to blend the need for both a men's ministry and the need for prophetic civic engagement. The next section endeavors to display these synergies.

Points of Synergy

Coming of age in a city whose past emanates both political involvement and economic justice, I developed an unquenchable thirst to change society positively. Seeing the monumental impact of the likes of Booker T. Washington on the country demonstrates for me what one man can do for his community. I know the depth of power that exists when men work together to constructively fight for what they know is right. I saw evidence of that example at Moton Field, the place where the Tuskegee Airmen trained. Seeing the biblical prophetic inspiration manifested by the confident piety of Tuskegee scientist, George Washington Carver, and appreciating how Jesus had a tremendous influence on the life of this brilliant genius, both caused me to want to do a socially engaging project in the church.

Spiritually, because I was raised in the church, everything I did and do for society comes from an embedded and experiential relationship with Jesus Christ. My father is my role model. Witnessing him take leadership and initiative in his community and church is what God used to give me an example and motivation to do likewise. By bringing me to church and exposing me to various African American civic leaders both present and past, including the eighth century Old Testament prophets and modern-day leaders, such as the

the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and several more, motivated me to act from the church context in order to influence the larger community. My father was known for speaking his mind wherever he might have been. I, therefore, lived in a community where boldness, public activism and spiritual piety were the backdrop for seemingly everything that happened.

What I Observed

As pastor of St. Paul, I noticed a church that, although possesses a great history, had been stagnate for quite some time. Moreover, the elected officials who represented the communities surrounding the church had not sufficiently advocated for their districts, causing resources to be diverted toward other communities. The money that is received by various agencies to support the Maysville community was often mismanaged. There was, simply, no strong voice of integrity that spokes for the socio-political needs of the people of the Maysville community within Mobile. I hoped to inspire men of God to be leading advocates for the Maysville area, and, through this project, yo motivate young men to comprehend involvement in the community as a personal responsibility.

There were not many strong African Americans who consistently spoke on politics, social justice or economic improvement for the black community from a Christian perspective in the whole city. There were quite a few black politicians but not real leaders who unabashedly spoke on behalf of the poor and oppressed. The ecclesial community was no exception. For a city the size of Mobile, there seemed to be no outspoken leading moral voice, black or white, in the community. In my observation, there were those who spoke out when disasters occurred or during election years, but

there was nothing sustained over a long period of time. To the credit of some leaders though, the tenor of the political discourse appeared to hinge on cooperation, and comfort seemed to be their chief aim.

Cooperation is, however, no substitute for righteousness, and silence cannot fill the houses of the poor with heat in the winter and cool air for the scorching hot summer. Remaining in comfortable political settings, where officials sense no pressure from their constituents or local leaders for too long, can produce laziness. Furthermore, an antagonistic view of the poor could develop, because serving and aiding the indigent to move from a position of subservience to one of independence is, from the point of view of the power structure, a great deal of work. The poor were not viewed through the lens of love and mercy, but through the lens of self-interest. When passing those in need, those with a moral conscious are reminded of their collective responsibility to be their “brother’s keeper.” This was not happening. Rather, the lavish lifestyle of the rich was causing perversion of righteousness and disdain for the poor. The wealthy were condescendingly blaming the poor for being without and arrogantly commending themselves for being able to obtain such an affluent life style. Once attacked by the poor or those advocating on their behalf, the elected officials immediately claimed others to be instigating class warfare and being jealous, hateful, or misinformed. By way of illustration, during the course of this project, a member of the city council, who makes over \$30,000 a year in the part-time position, asked for a raise. His part-time salary for this elected position is almost near the median salary level for the city. Once questioned about it at a city council meeting, he replied, “I work very hard for my district,” which is by the way one of the poorest in the city.

So the Mobile Bay Area needed a fervent informed voice of one who loved the people and more importantly God. It needed someone who was willing to learn the needs of the people and to place the community's progress ahead of their own. The entire city of Mobile needed a consistent strong voice that could not be bought or compromised.

Additionally, and even as troubling as the current political landscape, was the absence of male leadership both in the church and at the home. A scarcity of positive male role models existed. The African American community has an overwhelmingly high number of single mothers. As a result, notwithstanding the phenomenal job done by many of the mothers, too many of our young boys have to teach each other how to be men. This adolescent peer education is flawed because, for the most part, these young men do not have the ability to instruct others on how to be men because they are boys and do not have the experience or knowledge to lead anyone into adulthood. In response to the lack of positive Christian male role models, these young men looked up to those with material success, such as drug dealers, rap artist, and athletes. A most grievous aspect of the celebrity-driven education that takes place every day in our society is that it is based primarily on unsavory characters who quite often do not know how, nor do they care, to be role models.

I wish I could say that St. Paul A.M.E. Church was a strong public moral voice; but, to my consternation, the church had no organization that focuses either on men's or boys' ministry, except for what I had started concerning the training young boys how to be men. Likewise, there was no functioning entity within the denomination that sought to acclimate men or women to the political process or civic involvement, and St. Paul was no exception.

Proposal

My background led me to respond to the deplorable conditions stated above.

Learning from the likes of Rosa Parks, a Tuskegee native, I knew the impact that might be made when one person is willing to stand up for what they believed. Remembering the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, I learned how acts of the government should not be taken *prima facie* to be fair and equitable. Living only a few miles from Moton Field where the Tuskegee Airmen learned how to fly, I understood what black men could do, despite insurmountable odds, when they worked together to achieve a goal.

In regard to the above circumstances as it relates to the points of intersection between my autobiography and context, I proposed to address organically this deficiency within St. Paul. My proposal centered on equipping men for prophetic civic engagement and leadership. The project was strong in proclamation and action. It focused on empowering men to be more involved in their local political governing bodies. The proposal also targeted the Maysville community where the church was located and sought to address violence and drugs, as well as to mentor the young men in the church and community. The project focused on men because women have done a far better job in both community involvement and in raising young men. It is a travesty that, in far too many households, women had been alone in their valiant labor. This project hoped to give them some assistance in their task. Along with assisting in the nurture and guidance of young and adult males, I relied on a host of scholarly literature throughout this project. In the following section I seek to proffer a review of that literature, as well as the rationalization for utilizing them as a resource.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

I use several books to explain and validate my approach to prophetic civic engagement. It is, therefore, now apropos to offer greater understanding and clarity in regard to the key references and the supplemental resources. I intend to display, in this chapter, my familiarity with leading scholars who have produced literature that represent various models exercised in the field of Christian-based civic engagement. Through this section, I will also explore key concepts and varying models of ministry. Attempting to be objective, there will be points of agreement, as well as disagreement, with researched authors. Here, I seek only to introduce the chief literature, while, in the next chapter, I study it much more closely.

The Bible is both an historical and literary source, and, thus, serves as my chief foundation, not only for the project, but also my life. Universally and categorically, the Bible is by far the best-selling book in the history of the world. I will not go into much detail about it since much has been written on it already. Suffice it to say, the Bible is the book by which I receive my utmost guidance and inspiration. The Holy Bible is the inerrant and infallible word of God, a belief also shared by my denomination the A.M.E.

Church. The Bible teaches us about many important persons, attributes, actions, and principles, such as God, love, purpose, salvation, faith, and sacrifice. It is in Scripture where I found solace, enlightenment, and understanding concerning the task of prophetic civic engagement.

A few books of note offer support to my view of Scripture. I used the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* to provide a scholarly definition of the Hebrew word for “mind,” which is *leb*.¹ Baker’s encyclopedia is written from an evangelical perspective, with the noted evangelical scholar Walter Elwell serving as the general editor. The most significant insight this encyclopedia offers relates to the fact that the word *leb* in the original Hebrew pertains intrinsically to the person, to all that is within. Literally this word means “heart,” but the heart was the seat of the mind or intention in the ancient world and is often used to reflect, not the emotional life of the person, as in our culture, but, rather, the whole intellect and will, the real fortitude of the person,² as David W. Wead states: the “inner man, will, heart.”³

In order to initiate and complete a project that has as its basis societal uplift rooted in male prophetic involvement, the *leb*, the mind, the intention, the will, the inner man, meaning more than just the platform of conscious thinking, is tantamount. God through this text is telling the reader something extraordinary. Nehemiah 4:6 (NKJV) says, “So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people

¹ David W. Wead, “Mind,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 2:1461. See also William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 450.

² See also F. Rachel Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job*, Brown Judaic Studies 348 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007), 107–8.

³ Wead, 2:1461.

had a mind to work.” God is, therefore, stating profoundly through Nehemiah that the work that was accomplished was a result of men who trusted in the Creator and worked with every inch of passion, desire, inner strength, and will that they had. I knew, in order to impact the change which the troubling situation in my context required, I needed men willing to work equally as hard and with unswerving fidelity.

A deep heartfelt work was required to complete the transformative assignment of prophetic civic engagement. Without the definitive explanation of a word as over used as the “mind,” my didactical approach would have possessed gaping holes and caused me to make unnecessary intellectual assumptions. By relying on the above stated work, I could now pinpoint my research and structure the project’s methodology in a manner that best represents the true intent of the Hebrew writer.

Another resource I used and that added more credence to the above perspective was given by the *Pulpit Commentary* in the remarks related to Nehemiah.⁴ It was in this preacher’s commentary that I found the words, “Literally, ‘there was a heart to the people to work.’ They wrought, as we should say, ‘with a will’—they had their heart in the work.”⁵ The Commentary gives a most applicable representation of what a “mind to work” truly exemplifies for my project. In prophetic civic engagement, addressing oppressive structures and practices requires the practitioners to have “their heart in the work.”⁶

⁴ Henry D. M. Spence-Jones, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, Pulpit Commentary 7 (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶ *Ibid.*

A half-hearted or insincere work ethic would not suffice in responding to the debilitating problems that existed within my context. These problems arose gradually over time. Hence, many people did not appreciate the severity of the problems because they had casually become accustomed to them. Consequently, it was my plight to act prophetically and encourage others to assist me in exposing the horrid conditions within the community while offering some modules for self-improvement. None of this could have been done had all the people involved not been fully committed to achieving a positive change.

In another section of Chapter 3, I turn my focus toward the historical foundations for my project, which relates to the Christian martyrs and their prophetic civic engagement. This research relies heavily on both the Bible and scholarly referenced literature. I expound upon the martyrs in order to show the historical parallels that buttress my project. The hostile environment that early Christians faced on a daily basis is essential to understanding how prophetic and engaging the saints were. I take up the biblical material first.

The Bible details the life of the very first martyr within the new Christian religion: Stephen. Stephen is a man who possessed several spiritual gifts. He also had a benevolent heart exhibited by his aiding of the widows (Acts 6:1–5). But for his speaking up relating to the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ others in the Jewish dominated area wanted to kill him (Acts 6:6–7:59). The Bible relates that Stephen was martyred for his words and actions within his community. This is an instance of prophetic civic engagement, which is a critical idea that I will fully develop in a moment.

One of the most valuable resources I used throughout this section is a book by Everett Ferguson entitled *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to Pre-Reformation: The Rise and Growth of the Church in its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context*.⁷ In this book, Dr. Ferguson, who earned his Ph.D at Harvard University and is professor emeritus at Abilene Christian University, provides the reader with a sound, clear, meticulous analysis of the time period from the death of Jesus Christ to the era that led to the Reformation. Ferguson, a well-respected historian is an expert in Greek and church history.⁸ Ferguson's book gives the contemporary portrayal of the early Church martyrs after the time of Stephen. Their acts show most clearly the prophetic civic engagement that motivated of the martyrs. Ferguson relates that the very act of "Christian preaching often created wider disturbances (something those in authority always disliked), and Christian teaching threatened pagan society."⁹ Later, we see under such authoritarian dictators, such as the paranoid and mentally unstable emperor Nero, that even being called a Christian could cause someone to be persecuted in Roman society. "Nero's officials apparently took action against the group (not individuals) on account of 'the name,' that is, for being Christians."¹⁰

Another martyr for the Christian faith is Polycarp. Here is someone else who took a public stand against political pressure for his devout Christian beliefs. As recorded in Henry Bettenson's and Chris Maunder's *Documents of the Christian Church*, Polycarp

⁷ Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, vol. 1, *From Christ to Reformation: The Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁹ Ibid., 64.

¹⁰ Ibid., 65.

was a major leader in the early Church who was killed because he was a Christian leader who did not deny his faith in the midst of a political persecution.¹¹ Their work provides helpful original information. Except for the fact it is translated into English, the reader gets the impression they are actually reading the original text. The book quotes many leaders in the church. Going through multiple archives of documents, pulling essential information, and placing it all in this book, allows it to serve as a primary reference source for many students in seminaries across the country. The authors should be commended for their exemplary work.

As the historical evidence from the Bible and other primary documents of the early Church suggests, being prophetic was not an option for early Christians; rather, it was the only way they could function. The model for early church activists was to become counter-cultural revolutionaries in the moment that they made their confession of faith. For the early Christians, when they made their confession and refused to recant or participate in sacrifices for Roman gods in the presence of Caesar and angry mobs, the saints were, in fact, prophetically engaging their community.¹² They knew that their beliefs were unpopular but, nonetheless, held fast to them, all the while knowing of the oppressive structures that existed and the persecutions that awaited them. Their stand was a prophetic one that challenged their community norms.

Similar to these early Christians and their struggle against oppressive structures and practices are African American in the United States and, effectively, the entire

¹¹ Ed Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 66.

African diaspora. Thus, the claim that confessing to be a Christian was, in itself, an act of prophetic civic engagement is pivotal for my argument. Maintaining this assertion is a crucial plank in the historical foundation of the project. Sharing this point shows that prophetic civic engagement was not a relatively new practice for Christians.

A wonderful source of knowledge for the project in gathering facts concerning historical figures in the Christian religion came from one of the best biographical dictionaries in the world regarding the topic of Church History. The title of the book is *Who's Who in Christian History*.¹³ It covers the history of the Church from its inception with Jesus Christ to the twentieth century, depicting the lives of over 1,520 people in its entries. Hence, the book reveals details of the lives of Christian martyrs, including such prophetically engaged people as Justin Martyr, Joan of Arc, William Tyndale, and Abraham Lincoln.¹⁴ I so admire their compilation of biographical entries because they cover the entire political viewpoint spectrum from Christian conservatives and liberals alike. All readers, regardless of perspective, could, therefore, gain appreciation for such a vast volume of literature. In attempting to write a paper on such a new term such as “prophetic civic engagement” the above reference work is extremely profitable. The biographical dictionary offers an introduction to many in the Christian world who have executed or demonstrated prophetic civic engagement. While the exact term may not be used, the action steps and goals for the project were. Thus, this book is one work I will repeatedly use as the project is now adopted as part of my personal ministry.

¹³ J. D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort, eds., *Who's Who in Christian History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992).

¹⁴ I do not, however, take up all these individuals' stories within these pages.

Another work of literature the project utilizes is *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* by Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey Bromiley.¹⁵ Initially written in German this English translation offers an extensive list of notable people in Christianity. Fahlbusch is the lead editor and Bromiley is the English translator and editor. I found great delight in the plethora of Christian personas I had to choose from in the encyclopedia. The authors of this multi-volume have arranged their works to include an emphasis on socio-political dynamics. Such an aspect to scholarly writing is abundantly advantageous to me because my project centered on prophetic civic engagement aimed to address the social ills plaguing the context of St. Paul A.M.E. Church and the surrounding Maysville community. The greatest utility I received from the literature was to learn about a host of figures in the Church but particularly Martin Luther.¹⁶ My focus was specifically on Luther's civic engagement in the German society and Roman Catholic Church. Although Luther did not die a martyr's death, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* portrays him through the lens most appropriate to the project's focus, that is, as a counter-cultural, social activist who did not seek to form a new denomination just to reform and old, outdated one.¹⁷ Luther's story is a classic example of what prophetic civic engagement produces even when it has to confront the Church itself.¹⁸ It is indeed worth note that these authors saw fit in constructing their work to include various perspectives. Many

¹⁵ Erwin Fahlbusch and G.W. Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

¹⁶ David W. Lotz, "Martin Luther," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 3:346.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Here, too, I am reminded of Joan of Arc, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

philosophical and religious viewpoints are addressed in this reference work. The authors illustrate the highlighted Christians in light of their contemporary world not in spite of it. They show how figures such as Martin Luther compare with other philosophers and religious leaders of their time. For a student of history and an appreciator of intelligent civil discourse, I valued this approach and put it to use in my proposal.

Next, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* is another scholarly resource that I use in my paper.¹⁹ As one can tell by now in producing this paper, I relied heavily on biblical and Christian historical dictionaries. It is so I can obtain informative, unbiased facts on significant practitioners of prophetic civic engagement in the history of the ancient world and Christianity. *The Oxford Dictionary* is no different. This one-volume dictionary is excellent for any person seeking to gain greater clarity on a person of interest as it relates to the Church. I used it to examine, not only a person, but also the Supremacy Act of 1534 enacted by King Henry VIII.

A book, which even after conducting my research is hard for me to put down, is Theodore Jennings' *Good News to the Poor, John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*.²⁰ Jennings in this scholarly work, which is based on the sermons, writings and recorded works of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Movement, deals with the Wesley's view of wealth and the economic system. Jennings vividly and repeatedly articulates Wesley's "dymystification of wealth."²¹ Additionally, I value Jennings because he

¹⁹ Frank. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁰ Theodore W. Jennings Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

includes a discussion of Wesley's stance on various social issues of the day, in particular slavery and his understanding of the "preferential option for the poor."²² Although Wesley was a proponent of a few ideas with which I disagree, such as supporting monarchies, and being against the American colonies plight for independence, I find more with which I agree with Wesley than disagree.²³ Wesley advocated for the indigent in England and for slaves all over the world. I further admire his views on the role and practices of the church, which gives me more validation for being a Methodist.²⁴

John Wesley sought to go against the norms of not just his society, but the Anglican Church, as well. Undeterred, Wesley sought to identify himself with the poor, suffering and being marginalized with them. Wesley suffered great losses due to his civic engagement and the positions he took, but that did not hinder him greatly. He stuck to his method, and, today, several denominations and schools of thought have arise from of the movement he began.²⁵ Because of Jennings' precise and comprehensive portrayal of Wesley as it relates to his social involvement, I was more confident in my selection of Wesley as one of my project's historical figures. Wesley serves as another person who has already modeled the type of prophetic civic engagement I am attempting to do in my context.

In gaining insight surrounding yet another prophetic civic engager, I turn to Richard Newman's book entitled, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME*

²² Ibid., 47.

²³ Ibid., 211.

²⁴ Ibid., 47, 82, 211.

²⁵ Ibid., 157–158.

Church, and the Black Founding Fathers.²⁶ Newman's work is one of the most detailed, well-researched autobiographies on America's first Black bishop, Richard Allen, who is the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen was a social activist, an adamant abolitionist, and community organizer. Newman writes how Allen was, during the yellow fever epidemic, one of only a few who dared to provide service to the suffering, both black and white. Newman provides statements from Allen's extensive writings countering negative stereotypes about blacks in regard to the disease. Moreover, through his writings, Newman shows Allen offers ample support to the cause of the abolition of slavery.²⁷ He pre-dates famed abolitionists, Frederick Douglass.

Unfortunately, Allen does not receive the credit he is due from many historians.

Freedom's Prophet shows Allen's model for prophetic engagement, which is similar to Martin Luther and several others before him, addressing inequities within the church. Indeed, few have impacted the church as a whole in America the way Richard Allen, a true pioneer for justice has. This is yet another reason why I believe that Newman's book is a must read and serves as a valuable reference resource for my paper.

The context in which Richard Allen did his work was the Methodist Episcopal denomination and truly the entire young republic of the United States of America. Newman does a splendid job of chronicling Allen's movement from St. George to Bethel, by outlining the legal battles, internal disputes, and disagreements, even among Allen's own leadership circle. This scholarly work proffers a seemingly first-hand look at the life

²⁶ Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet Bishop Richard Allen: The A.M.E. Church and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Ibid., 105.

of one of the greatest prophetic civic engagers who ever lived. Allen's story gives me more appreciation of how weighty the goal of improving society is. It shows, in addition, the potential pitfalls of leadership and the frailty of startup organizations. Through Allen's life, I also learned the extent to which those with power will go legally to try to avert and destroy needed transformation.²⁸

To gain greater awareness of the plight of Richard Allen and others who worked diligently to create and sustain predominately Black churches, I sought the scholarly council of one Henry Mitchell. He is the author of the *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years*.²⁹ Mitchell intricately presents information about the Black Church collectively and individually. One of many ways I benefitted from such a display of knowledge is by obtaining an appreciation for the long sense of struggle that exist within the Black community in trying to make their environment a better place. Each predominantly black denomination founded in this country had to endure adversity, primarily at the hands of whites but quite often at the hands of black as well, in a behind-the-back way. This wealth of wisdom is invaluable to me as I seek to build, not a new denomination, but, rather, a movement where the members can go out in a prophetic manner to address the oppressive structures and practices that exist in their community.

The next book that greatly aided the project's theme, encouraging people of faith to confront unjust systems, is already being referred to as a classic in many academic

²⁸ Ibid., 70–71.

²⁹ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings The Long Hidden Realities of the First Years*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

circles though it is not very old. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* by Gustavo Gutiérrez has changed the discourse of Christian activism since its publication.³⁰ Gustavo's book provides the theological perspective that is at the foundation of my project. God is understood as the liberator of those in bondage and the true emancipator of our soul, which is pivotal for inspiring participants to engage prophetically their surroundings. By doing so, they are instruments of God, seeking freedom for any who are shackled by falsehood, greed, corruption, and sin.

Still another work advanced my proposal from a theological basis, and it, like Gutierrez's book, served as an additional pillar for my project. One difference this new work has with the aforementioned item is that it is not a book but an essay: James H. Cone's "God is Black."³¹ In my opinion, it is one of the most revolutionary, thought-provoking, and controversial scholarly works written in the twentieth century. In the essay, Cone makes a bold claim for a society that bases its historical assumptions on trite, but symbolic, materials, such as European paintings of biblical figures and Hollywood movies which primarily consist of white actors; he argues that God does not resemble the person they envision or see on the television screen. To the contrary, Cone states from the onset, in his very title, that God is black. It should be noted that I disagree with any exclusive carnal portrayal of the image of God, because God is above race, gender and all human categories. The Creator is the Alpha, meaning that God is before all things, including human categories such as one's sex and skin color.

³⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

³¹ James H. Cone, "God is Black," in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, edited by Susan B. Thistlewaite and Mary Potter Engel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 101–14.

Being a highly educated theologian, Cone is not meaning to portray God as simply a mortal with skin, bone and flesh. Cone knows that God is Spirit. Cone seeks to convey that God identifies with oppressed people who are suffering everywhere. Cone claims God is on the side of the marginalized and the castigated. In America at the time Cone writes his essay, then, if God sides with those who are exploited and downtrodden, then God must be black.³²

Such an bold claim might be met with either optimism or disdain. I greet it with optimism. A cherished concept, which greatly undergirded prophetic civic engagement in my project, was the awareness by those in the context of St. Paul and the Maysville community, who are victims of injustice, that God identifies with them. The acknowledgment that God is present with people, most importantly, in their suffering can provide a peace that is unspeakable and gives greater clarity and strength of purpose in combating wicked situations and undergoing turbulent circumstances.

Speaking of the above theologies of liberation, a magnificent resource to survey is edited by Susan Brooks Thistlewaite and Mary Potter Engel and bears the name *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*.³³ The book is a magnanimous expose on different types of theologies with a concentration on liberating systematic thought-processes. In doing my research, I saw both liberation and black theology discussed and elaborated upon in sensitive detail. Furthermore, the book outlines other theologies that have been only recently developed. A fact I appreciate

³² E. Brooks Helifield, "North American Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 3:780.

³³ Susan Brooks Thistlewaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds., *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Theologies from the Underside* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

about the authors in the book, some of whom I disagree with, is that they do not tell you how to think; instead these authors challenge the reader to think in different ways.

Hoping to provide participants with a depth of understanding on ways politics and faith intersect, I used another volume to reinforce my argument. Adam Hamilton's production of *Seeing Gray Where Faith & Politics Meet: New Resource for Group Study Participant Study Guide* was a fundamental reference for me during my project.³⁴ In the book, Hamilton shows in an intimate small group style how best to relate political matters to Christians. He relies on Scripture and the statements of renowned persons in the church to show how best to make that connection. Hamilton, a United Methodist pastor, has a theology that is closely aligned with mine, and we share a similar passion for politics. Hence, Adam's work is a perfect companion text for my proposal.

Few authors today write on matters that are more provocative and enticing to me than the next author. Michelle Alexander, who authors a book entitled *the New Jim Crow Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.³⁵ This is a highly acclaimed book, which many scholars and civic minded theologians recommend to any serious individual seeking to acquire a better understanding of one of the most unspoken of problems in America. The United States prison system, Alexander states in her book, is America's "New Jim Crow."³⁶ From the treatment of its inmates, to the constituency of the prison, and the gross categorization and deprivation of inmates once they are released from

³⁴ Adam Hamilton, *Seeing Gray: Where Faith & Politics Meet: New Resource for Group Study Participant Study Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009).

³⁵ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow Mass: Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: New Press, 2012).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1–3.

prison all resemble, according to the book, the laws, social morays, and stereotypes of blacks who lived under Jim Crow.³⁷ One of the areas I intend to focus on next, now that my project is complete, is the judicial system, in particular the jails and prisons in the Mobile area, along with members of St. Paul Church and several young men in the community who have been recently released.

Even though there are several books listed and detailed above, many more exist that were utilized in collecting concepts, relevant practices, information about historical figures, and other meaningful material for this project. Descriptions of them and their principles may not have been fully exhausted in this section, but, in the chapters following, one will observe their significance as it relates to providing foundational support for prophetic civic engagement though project development and implementation.

³⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Foundation of the Peer Group

My Doctor of Ministry Program peer group is called “Prophetic Preaching and Praxis.” The eighth century prophets gave the people an unapologetic message often to do unpopular and uneasy tasks, such as to cease from idolatry, practice social justice for the poor, and to turn from sin and back to God. The prophets were the spokespersons for the living Lord God, Almighty. They dealt with the Word of truth. As Christian believers, we are to mimic the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a myriad of ways. One key aspect of this is to engage in prophecy, much like the eighth century prophets and Jesus did. My project reflects the Christian call to prophetic ministries in a manner consistent with my peer group’s understanding of such. My role is to help the Gospel of Jesus Christ come alive in the life of St. Paul A.M.E. Church.

Having been at St. Paul for over two years now, I have noticed this community suffers from the same problems as other predominately black communities: a shortage of truly involved Christian leadership and a virtual absence of men from the positive inspirational life of the society, family, and the local church. Consequently, I proposed to initiate a plan for prophetic civic engagement that encourages men to be more civically

involved, both politically and socially. I also sought to mentor young boys to do the same.

St. Paul A.M.E. Church had less than 20 active men in the church at the beginning of this project. The word “active” here is operative and means that less than twenty men attended the men’s ministry meetings, choir rehearsals or serve on leadership boards of the church. As a result of the endeavors of this project, we have recently established St. Paul’s first chapter of “Sons of Allen,” which is the now the male ministry arm of our church. The men of St. Paul have been instrumental in the past few months in doing repair and capital improvement projects within our local church and for the elderly members of our community.

A willing spirit to work was evident amongst some of the brethren, but they were not very civically involved as a whole. There was no participation in various local governing boards or grassroots meetings. The most the men did, as far as civic involvement was concerned, was vote and on occasion help out members of the church if they needed some work done. Those are good and worthwhile efforts, but they did not sufficiently tap into the full potential of the kind-hearted, well-equipped, community-minded men that did exist at St. Paul.

Furthermore, St. Paul is located less than 300 yards from one of the city’s largest governmental housing units, R. V. Taylor. At or near this location, many young females sell their bodies while several of the young men sell narcotics or unauthorized prescription drugs. Illegal activity runs rampant and violence is commonplace, even surprisingly among the school children, who go to classes near the church, as well. Due to the location of the church, St. Paul receives visitors daily, many of whom are from R.

V. Taylor, who solicit church members, as well as the pastor, for money. The overwhelming majority of those who come by to seek some help are young males. Occasionally, someone comes to the church to simply ask for prayer or spiritual encouragement. All of the young men who come to the church for such requests had no positive father figure in their lives. The young men either do not know their father or have very little respect for him. It should now be apparent why I chose to work only with males. Undoubtedly for too many young men, no positive male presence exists in their life, and the consequences of such an absence had been devastating for them and the African American community as a whole. While this is true for females—there is a need for females to be mentored by godly females, too—in my humble opinion, there is a far greater shortage of male leadership in the family and community of African Americans than female.

To witness the unfortunate truths that would substantiate my decision, all one must do is review: (1) the high number of single African American mothers and the men who do not pay child support; (2) the disparity between males and females in college; (3) the ratio of black boys in jail versus the ones in college; and lastly (4) the few number of men in church compared to women in predominately black churches. The numbers are extremely telling and provided further support for the subject matter in this project. In Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, she postulates (and I agree) that America has a "new racial caste system,"¹ which is buttressed by the American judicial system. It has a grossly

¹ Alexander, 22.

disproportionate number of convictions and higher sentencing rates for African Americans than for whites.

I chose political and social civic involvement for my project because the churches in Mobile have been apathetic long enough in regard to the poor conditions at government housing projects, the black-on-black violence, the pervasive illegal activity and the resulting large incarceration rates, the breakdown of the family, and the failure of black men to survive, thrive, and lead productive lives. The many churches' silence has allowed this sector of society to be unsupported generally and to go unchecked by Christian moral principles. The results have been catastrophic to the black community. Getting men involved in church-led social and political action will go a long way to alleviate these many problems.

When considering the dreary condition and morally-deprived state in which the community found itself, I sought to bring about a transformation. I come from a background where I benefited from a strong male influence, chiefly my father. Later, I noticed that I was in the minority, and this cognizance produced an unwavering passion to address this cancerous dilemma to ensure other males could benefit as I did by having a positive male presence in their life. Because of my personal experience and the passion I developed, I have focused this project on male-centered and male-led discipleship. I, therefore, determined to devise a prophetic based civic involvement project concentrated on training Christian men for performing a greater role civically in society, at the same time mentoring young men to take on more of a Christ-like responsibility for their community. Mentoring men both young and old for prophetic civic involvement through St. Paul and into the surrounding community is the cause to which God is calling me.

Biblical Foundations for Ministry

The biblical foundation for equipping men for prophetic civic leadership is seen in both the Old and New Testaments. You can see the prophetic mandate for believers to become engaged in their surroundings in the law, the historical books, the writings, and the prophets in the Old Testament, as well as both the Gospels and the epistles in the New Testament. I hope that by the conclusion of the paper, all will have a greater thankfulness for the clarion biblical call for men to prophetic involved in their communities, both socially and politically.

Governmental and social involvement of Christians in the lives of the community provides the church an opportunity to impact real change by being a tangible example of Jesus Christ to the world. Jesus did not stay in the temple; instead, he walked the streets preaching and teaching, and assisting the people. Jesus was heavily involved in the Jewish politics of his day. “The political parties of Jesus’ time were the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots.”² He constantly rebuked the leading Jewish political figures of his day, challenging the corruption of the temple aristocracy in the Sadducees (e.g. Matt 3:7; cf. Mark 11:15; John 2:15); the middle-class Pharisees who did not serve the underclasses and seemed to puff themselves up in public displays of religiosity instead (e.g., Matt 23:13–30); and the violence of both the Romans and the rebellious Zealots (e.g., Matt 11:12; cf. Luke 3:14, where John the Baptist confronts the violence of Roman soldiers). We must follow suit in our religious actions.

² Hamilton, 23.

What is Prophetic Civic Involvement Biblically?

Throughout the Bible, there is an apparent call on the lives of followers of God to provide prophetic leadership on political and socio-economic issues. Both the Old and New Testament provide invaluable spiritual insight to the topic of civic prophetic involvement. Biblically, being prophetic is boldly, truthfully, and quite often times speaking radically to the spiritual and physical condition of a group of people. These modules address the facing of existential quandaries with spiritually pragmatic discerning action. Scripture is inundated with examples that exemplify the principle that great things happen when men of God get involved prophetically.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines civics as “Of, pertaining to, or belonging to a city, to a citizen, or to citizenship citizens.”³ As a result, proponents of civic engagement should seek to speak prophetically on any and all issues as they may relate to the citizenry or members of one’s own community. Sensibly speaking, believers should be seeking to shed light on dark situations and/or to bring a righteous change to evil circumstances.

The project that was proposed encouraged men to operate as modern-day prophets in their community.

The prophet’s commission lays upon him a direct measure of responsibility for the spiritual condition and fate of the people. Though set apart for his task and often forced to stand alone, the prophet in his approach to God, speaks for the people to whom he belongs, and who cannot or will not acknowledge their spiritual necessity.⁴

³ William Morris, ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, NY: American Heritage, 1970), 246.

⁴ Kenneth Cummings, “The Prophets United Theological Seminary Presentation” (lecture, the Greater Gaines A.M.E. Church, Savannah, GA, October 26, 2011).

Hence, someone who is involved in prophetic civic engagement from a biblical foundational standpoint attempts to serve as an advocate for those who are unable or insufficiently aware to fight for themselves and to be a standard bearer for biblical teachings on community/cultural life. All of the forth-telling, activism and initiatives that utilize or interact with governmental entities and/or the people as a whole for those adhering to the practice of conduct prescribed should be based on the Holy Writ.

Men in the Bible Who Display Prophetic Civic Involvement

Due to the newness of the term “prophetic civic engagement,” a necessity exists to display the presence of it in the Bible in order to offer an accurate presentation by the original practitioners. Today, men are absent in disproportionately larger numbers than their female counterparts in spaces that provide positivity and growth, such as the church and civic organizations. They are, however, in abundance in areas where there is extreme plight and negative circumstances, such as jails, street corners, and strip clubs. The above caused me to turn to the Bible to seek both inspiration concerning, as well as a foundation for, men to become more involved in reversing this sinister cycle.

The Bible is replete with passages that demonstrate how and why men of God get engaged prophetically in civics. From these examples, we see that wonderful, nearly impossible feats occur when men of God get involved righteously in their surroundings. Abraham became civically involved when his nephew Lot was captured as a prisoner of war in Gen. 14:13–14. Abraham went with men from his camp to go and pursue the kings who took Lot and his goods. The major significance is that it exemplifies the measures taken by men of God when the authorities wrongfully capture one of their family

members. Now, to be clear, violence is not how I would advise anyone to address a similar situation. Nonetheless, the tenacity, determination and collaborative effort Abraham shows in emancipating Lot should be shared by all seeking to free wrongly incarcerated, captured people from their own family (biological or ecclesial) and community.

Jacob's sons were civically involved when their family did not have enough food to eat as revealed in Gen. 42:1–2. The text depicts a father telling his boys to travel to Egypt in order to acquire some corn. Repeatedly, journeying to Egypt in order to petition the governmental officials about obtaining needed resources shows us a telling fact about biblically-based prophetic civic engagement: the pericope a prophetic civic engager to go to great lengths in order to receive government provided resources.

This text also reveals why some may get opposition from those within the bureaucracy. In this case, Joseph did not give his brothers anything initially, but toyed and tested them because he remembered how they treated him. In the end, though, as should be true for most instances of prophetic civic engagement, it should retain an element of reconciliation. All participants should be aware of how their actions, both past and present may have negatively affected someone, and this humbling truth should be ever present at the meeting table.

The book of Exodus details Moses' and Aaron's persistent call to the Egyptian empire's leader, pharaoh, telling him to let God's people go free. Here, we have prophetic leadership in the releasing of followers of God from bondage, oppression, and discrimination. Moses, being inspired and empowered by God, led the Israelites out of Egypt. Ten times did Moses present unto pharaoh a declaratory judgment from God, and

each time Egypt's ruler ultimately refused. Pharaoh vacillated between approval of and objection to letting the Israelites go free; but, for each objection Moses, being instructed by God, went back to Pharaoh in order to relay a new punishment that the Egyptians would suffer due to their leader's unyielding reluctance to release them. Fighting for the freedom of a people and speaking truth to power on behalf of God are both key factors in civic prophetic leadership. The Exodus narrative also demonstrates the measures to which God will go to free God's people.

Joshua and the Israelites walked around the walls of Jericho, and they came down (Josh 6:1–20). Marching for a cause is an act that dates back to the days of the Old Testament. In this text, the children of God faithfully walk around the walls of a city seven times. Following the last trek, the Israelites gave a shout and the walls began to tumble down. By doing so, the soldiers of Israel could go in to attack the city without great hindrance. The faith walk, otherwise known as marching, is a model of prophetic civic engagement utilized by Israelites and was inspired by explicit direction from God. The purpose was to disarm their enemy of formidable weapons and their safe posture behind the walls. This nonviolence means of protest has been used for centuries now as a peaceful method of civil disobedience that morally disarms a violent opposition, and causes the marchers to appear more civil and humane. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the connection between Joshua 5–6 and creative non-violence. Referring to the African American spiritual “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho,” King said in his speech, given on the steps of the of the State Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, after the successful completion of the Selma to Montgomery March on March 25, 1965: “The battle is in our

hands. And we can answer with creative nonviolence the call to higher ground to which the new directions of our struggle summons us.”⁵

Samuel was prophetically civically involved when he spoke up to King Saul concerning his disobedience to God as stated in 1 Samuel 15:10–35. As a prophet, Samuel had a duty to transmit God’s message to the king, even though, at this particular time, the communication was negative for King Saul because he disobeyed God’s directive. Samuel still had the courage, however, to convey the news since he had a mandate from God. Applying this text to prophetic civic engagement, we see how believers must not be afraid to speak the truth to leaders even when it may hurt their egos or feelings. Samuel personally had some affection for Saul. The text shows how Samuel “grieved” over what he had to tell Saul. On occasion, when one is prophetically civically engaged, one may be asked to speak against people of whom one is personally fond, as well as to give messages that grieve the heart.

Many others in the Bible have become politically engaged. For instance, Daniel and his friends became active in civics by refusing to eat the king’s food (Dan 1:8). John the Baptist did so in chastising the unholy, incestuous king Herod (Matt 14:3–4). None are, however, more important than Jesus Christ. Yes, Jesus became politically involved numerous times, from breaking the Jewish law in gathering food and healing on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1–14). In these simple, yet paradoxically confounding complex, acts Jesus shows that law is generally meant to help, not hurt, people in order that they might

⁵ Nijay Gupta, “And the Walls Came a Tumblin’ Down: Joshua 5:1–6:17,” *Lectio: Guided Bible Reading, The Center for Biblical and Theological Education, Seattle Pacific University*, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://blog.spu.edu/lectio/and-the-walls-came-a-tumblin-down>, citing Martin Luther King, Jr., “Our God is Marching On!” *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute*, March 25, 1965, accessed March 31, 2014, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/our_god_is_marching_on/.

be whole. Jesus had to remind people in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” The rules are created for humans; humans were not created for laws. Humankind was made, in fact, to glorify God. Jesus was a revolutionary, counter-cultural leader, and he had no problem becoming engaged in civics to address a misapplication of the law. His objective was to bring salvation to the world.

Jesus advises his followers to participate in civics in his famous words recorded in Mark 12:17, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Realizing this, we should always be ready return to the government items that belong to them, or which they ask for in return for being a citizen, such as voting, giving input on policy decisions, and paying taxes. We should never, however, allow the government to take or damage what is God’s, such as the soul, one’s dignity, humanity, and conscious. Moreover, the government should never cause us to compromise our principles, because it did not give them to us. God did. This is the very justification for civil disobedience as Martin Luther King, Jr. explains in his 1963 “Letter from the Birmingham Jail.”⁶

Jesus became politically involved when he did not deny that he was the Christ and the king of the Jews (Mark 15:2; Matt 27:11; Luke 23:3; John 18:33–34). Consequently, Jesus was crucified, according to the text, as a result of the political pressure he was placing on both Jewish leaders and Roman sovereignty just by doing what He was instructed by the Triune God to do. The Savior of the world got civically involved when he did not deny whom he was, or what he was doing. Simply by saying that he was the

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., “From the Birmingham Jail,” *Christian Century* 80 (June 12, 1963): 767–73.

Christ presented a threat to the rulers of the time. Needless to say, Jesus did not shy away from his mission even when his life was at risk. Jesus represents the best model of prophetic civic engagement we have throughout the entire Bible. Though others will be featured, Jesus was the person around whom the project centered, and his ministry was the best example for implementation.

As Jesus did, so should believers do today, that is, stand firm in their beliefs and conviction of who they are and what they do in Jesus. Knowing that they are endangering the status quo, the Bible encourages Christian to be bold and never deny Christ in word or deed; remembering always the words of Matt 10:33, “if you deny me before men I will deny you before my father.” With that background set forth, I will now endeavor to focus on and exegete my two primary texts, Neh. 4:6 and Phil. 2:5, in detail.

Chief Old Testament Text: Nehemiah 4:6

The first text is taken from the book of Neh. 4:6: “So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.” I selected a pivotal passage from this most esteemed Old Testament book, which narrates the social, religious, and geo-political emancipation for the Jewish people. Many church leaders and scholars underestimate the historical significance of this book, but Mervin Breneman thinks otherwise:

Nehemiah’s work in establishing the Jerusalem community, defending it against its neighbors and against syncretism, has left its mark on history. Because this community persevered, our Old Testament was completed and preserved. Because the Jewish people continued as instruments in God’s redemptive plan, the savior came and fulfilled God’s great plan of salvation.”⁷

⁷ Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, New American Commentary 10 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publisher, 1993), 59.

Biblically, this text lays a firm foundation for the ministerial project. Nehemiah first became politically involved when he was notified as to what happened to the walls of Jerusalem. Here, we see Nehemiah speaking in regards to the rebuilding of the wall.

I chose Nehemiah as a primary text because his plight closely resembles the model prophetic civic engagers must undertake in order to help our communities reach their full potential. At the time Nehemiah sojourned to Jerusalem, he had served King Artaxerxes as cupbearer. “Nehemiah was employed in the Persian court as a cupbearer responsible for selecting the king’s wine, tasting it as a defense against assassination, and providing the king companionship.”⁸ While in the palace serving as a cupbearer, Nehemiah is informed of the terrible condition the wall of the temple in Jerusalem is in by his brother Hanani (1:2–3). 2 Chronicles 36:19 tells us how the Babylonians pillaged the once prominent, glorious city. When Nehemiah heard of the devastation, he wept (1:4). Nehemiah was so distraught that King Artaxerxes saw him and knew something was wrong (2:2). Before Nehemiah commenced anything, he prayed. “It was characteristic of Nehemiah to regard prayer and action as the necessary and complementary ways to face each developing situation.”⁹

Being alert and aware of his valuable opportunity to help promote social change and spiritual uplift, Nehemiah the cupbearer then began his prophetic civic engagement and sought redress. His first step was garnering the support of King Artaxerxes (2:1–8). It was a bold move from any vantage point, but even more so when one takes into

⁸ Ralph W. Kline, “The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 3., *Kings – Judith*, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 751.

⁹ Williamson, 226.

consideration that kings do not typically trust many people to be in their court, yet alone serve as the cupbearer; and now, Nehemiah was asking for permission to leave to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah received permission, protection, and provision from King Artaxerxes to travel to Jerusalem (2:8). In a quest to gain more intelligence on the area, Nehemiah undertook a reconnaissance mission (2:9–16). Mervin Breneman states of this: “Praying and trusting God does not mean that research is not necessary. Nehemiah wanted to assess the situation before presenting his project to the officials and the people.”¹⁰

Before the men completed the work, the Israelites had to endure much hardship. Additionally, Nehemiah is scoffed by his detractors, and the Jews are mocked for simply being Jewish. “The renewed opposition comes literally from all sides. Sanballat of course, represents Samaria to the north . . . Judah’s immediately Southern neighbor, the Idumeans (Edomites) ‘The Ammonites’ were immediately to the east of Judah ‘The Ashdodites’ Judah’s western neighbor”¹¹ were all against what Nehemiah was doing. In responding to the ridicule from Sanballat and Tobiah, however, Neh. 4:5 shows us, “The first thing Nehemiah did was to turn to God in prayer.”¹² A common response for Nehemiah through this most arduous ordeal is prayer. “In every difficulty he calls upon God and not in vain.”¹³ Nehemiah knew well the power of prayer and he had faith that God would answer his call.

¹⁰ Breneman, 180.

¹¹ Williamson, 225.

¹² Breneman, 194.

¹³ Henry D. M. Spence, and Joseph Ezell, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Job*. Pulpit Commentary 7. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 66.

Nehemiah and his co-laborers were even subject to emotional and psychological warfare as a result of fear from their own kindred. Due to the attacks from pagan neighbors, local Jews living nearby Jerusalem begin to be afraid, grew apathetic and tried to discourage the laborers, as seen in Neh. 4:10–12. As Breneman observes, “Internal problems can be more serious than those from the outside. The people were becoming discouraged.”¹⁴

Nehemiah’s experience is related to mine at St. Paul. Immediately after I arrived at St. Paul, people informed me, in the manner of Hanani’s conversation with Nehemiah, of the depressing condition in which the church and community found itself. My soul wept as I looked extensively upon the gloomy condition of male involvement in the church and the dilapidated buildings in the Maysville community, along with the plentiful number of young men without positive father figures. On top of all this, there were some within my context who felt no need existed to become engaged, claiming the problems were too vast and solution extremely complex.

Much of what ails my context was akin to the predicament in Jerusalem. As the Babylonians plundered Jerusalem, so did oppressive laws in the Jim Crow South of yesterday and the current gentrification policies, educational practices, anti-family initiatives, and current political climate are doing today. The phrase within the Old Testament text, Neh. 4:6, that possesses the greatest utility for my project is “had a mind to work.”

¹⁴ Breneman, 197.

Word Study: “Mind”

A focus on the word “mind” is essential for my project, seeing that in order to do this type of work the practitioner must have the “mind” to do it. This is especially true in light of how arduous the assignment was, especially considering that I might suffer the same criticism and doubt that Nehemiah underwent from others like Sanballat the Samaritan, Tobiah the Ammonite, and even the Jews who lived near their enemies (Neh. 4:2–3). Adherents of prophetic civic engagement must have a “mind” to do the work that God is showing them must be done in their community. Prophetic civic engagement is a fresh revitalizing approach to the mundane four-walled ministries of most places of worship. Subsequently, one needs to have the “mind” to execute this revolutionary, yet peaceful, work.

In the text Neh. 4:6 the English word “mind” is a translation of the Hebrew word “*leb*.” It means “inner man, will, and heart.” In the Old Testament, there was no separate word that was used for a man’s mind. “This noun is best translated ‘plans’ or ‘thoughts’ and can describe the plans of either individuals or God.”¹⁵ Translators of the English versions have supplied other words (soul, spirit, or heart) as the context dictates.”¹⁶ Fundamentally, when Nehemiah uses the word “mind” in v. 6, it could be interchanged with the words spirit, heart, soul, inner man or will without losing an iota of biblical accuracy.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mounce, 450.

¹⁶ Mead, 2:1461.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Other English translations differ slightly on the word choice. While other versions use the word “mind” some do not. For example, The New International Version uses the phrase “worked with all their heart.” Likewise, the New Living Translation states, “for the people have worked with enthusiasm.” Whereas most the rest of the translations use the word “mind,” the above example shows the variance in use and how that lends credence to the definition of mind and its usage in the Old Testament.

Biblical theologians support the proposal of the above comprehensive view of the mind with subtle variations. After reviewing many commentaries, their sentiments seemed summed up best by Henry D. M. Spence-Jones in his 1909 Pulpit Commentary on Nehemiah. It espouses, “Literally, ‘there was a heart to the people to work.’ They wrought, as we should say, ‘with a will’—they had their heart in the work.”¹⁸ Such universality on the meaning of a particular word provides further ammunition to my perspective along with solidifying this text as biblical support for the project. In order for there to be any type of sustained prophetic civic engagement in the context of St. Paul A.M.E. Church, the people must have a “mind” to work. A mind to work is manifested by having a focused will, heart, and soul, which desires for the task to be completed.

Supporting text: Acts 5:12

For uplift and community building the Bible gives solid references that can supplement the belief of how important the mind is to the work of prophetic civic engagement. Additionally, in showing how pivotal it is for all to come together and be of like mind, Acts 5:12 says, “And through the hands of the apostles many signs and

¹⁸ Spence-Jones, 38.

wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch." As happened with Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall so it did occur again for the early church as recorded here in Acts. Once people of God put their mind to something "many great signs and wonders" can transpire.

No matter how great the act is though, make no mistake, the result of the work is always secondary to the chief goal. Likewise, undergoing prophetic involvement is not simply about doing work but truly having a transformational experience with God. As one helps people in the community, one should never cease to realize that one is doing a work for the Lord. Practitioners of the faith in Jesus Christ ought not to let their work override their faith. On the contrary, their faith should be why they, in fact, execute the work. Being a proponent of prophetic civic engagement reminds one that one should have the "mind to work" because when we see those we are called to serve we should see Jesus. Speaking of which, I am now led to the New Testament Scripture that functioned as the biblical foundation for my project.

Chief New Testament Text: Philippians 2:5

In reviewing the New Testament, one finds a verse that greatly compliments the Old Testament text and serves perfectly as a biblical source of inspiration for my project. It is from the book of Philippians, which is one of the oldest books of the New Testament. "The Epistle to the Philippians was written about thirty years after Ascension, about ten years after the first preaching of the gospel by St. Paul at Philippi."¹⁹ The style

¹⁹ Henry D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*, Pulpit Commentary 20 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950), i.

of the book of Philippians from its structure, message, and delivery fits perfectly within the category of Pauline letters. Consequently, “the epistle bears all the marks of Pauline authorship in a pre-eminent degree. Its teaching is unmistakably that of Paul.”²⁰

At the time Paul wrote this transformative, spiritually liberating book of the New Testament his life physically was in turmoil. “He writes, then when his trial is in its preliminary phase, and the outcome uncertain.”²¹ In fact, many believe he wrote this book to express his gratitude to the church of Philippi for what they had done for him. “From time to time when he was in difficulties they had come to his assistance, and when he was in prison, unable to do anything for his own support they could not but feel that their help was needed.”²² Although Paul is appreciative to the Philippians for all they have done, that is not the sole reason for him writing them this letter. “While he thanks the Philippians, he is also concerned about them, and these two feelings, his gratitude and his anxiety are blended in the letter and give it a character of its own.”²³

My project is built upon Phil. 2:5. What precipitated Paul writing this text is great concern for the people. “Paul pleads with them again and again to have done with personal ambition. It is in this connection that he introduces the sublime passage on the example of Christ, who was of divine nature and yet humbled himself and took on him

²⁰ E. F. Scott, “The Epistle to the Philippians,” in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 11, *Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 12.

the form of a servant.”²⁴ Thus, Philippians 2:5 states, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Word Study: “Mind”

In the book of Philippians, the English word for mind is a translation from the Greek word φρονέω. It means, “To employ one’s faculty for thoughtful planning, with emphasis upon the underlying disposition or attitude—‘to have an attitude, to think in a particular manner.’”²⁵ Historically, the word meant “diaphragm; regarded as the seat of mental and spiritual activity, then [overtime it evolved to be defined as] ‘mind’ or ‘understanding.’ The compounds reflect the intellectual focus *phroneo* usually means ‘to think’ or ‘to plan.’”²⁶

In order for the project to be successful, proponents must have had to have an unshakable fidelity to Jesus Christ. Their mind should mirror his. Being humble and meek as was Jesus is a prerequisite for being involved prophetically in civil affairs. One should not come across condescendingly, neither paternalistic, nor arrogant. Having the mind of Christ changes a person’s viewpoint from a narcissistic approach to a more benevolent method. The question I want practitioners to ask is: “How can I help others?” and not “How can they help me?”

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1996), 1:324.

²⁶ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 1277.

Jesus constantly encouraged those who loved him to love others. The above passage shows how we should put that exhortation into action. Two prominent biblical theologians William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker state, “Throughout his ministry, by means of precept and example, Jesus had stressed the necessity of feelings and works of love, mercy, and generosity. So it is altogether natural that this is what he expects of his followers.”²⁷ As one reflects on the ministry of Jesus and his message to those devoted to following him, the above quote seems most accurate.

Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 5:43–46; 9:36–38; 25:35–37

The first scripture we will discuss is Matt 9:36–38, which says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary[a] and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” In having the same mind as Christ, it is imperative to possess innately compassion for those who are suffering. While doing ministry for God that directly impacts the lives of people, such as those articulated in Matthew 25, it is important that one loves and has compassion on them. In order to be a true laborer, one must have this type affection for those in the vineyard for whom they are working.

This type of worker is a rarity; yet they are in very high demand, which is why Jesus instructs us to “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his

²⁷ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1973), 888.

harvest (9:38).” In addition, the last part of this verse shows it is doubly significant to mentor young men so that they will be involved in prophetic civic engagement. The absence of true servants in the context of St. Paul, as we find in Philippians, was startling. In an effort to resolve the matter, a coordinated effort to address such a bleak forecast was of supreme appeal.

Another passage of scripture which best reflects what the ownership of the “mind” in the chief text should lead you to do is found in Matt 25:35–37. It reads “for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” Providing any type of authentic spiritual, physical, political, theological, and particularly civic prophetic leadership to God’s people, necessitates adopting the above verse as a template for any and all social action. It typifies a bedrock principle for me and manifests pragmatic modules of civic engagement for the initiative.

Next, I would like to turn your attention to Matthew 5:43–46:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?

Jesus is speaking; and the Savior of the world is telling his followers about loving their enemies. The above text correlates with Matthew 25 because it gives added dynamics to the service Jesus is asking us to undergo for the “least of these” in addition to displaying the magnitude of having an unconquered mind, as stated in Philippians 2:5. The Lord of the universe tells us to love even our enemies.

Within the approach of prophetic civic engagement it is abundantly clear that, at times, even our enemy needs a supporter when they are being wronged. As children of God, it is an awesome responsibility to speak on behalf of, not just your friends when they are in need, but your enemies as well. The only way this can be effectively done is if one undeniably abides by the text, “love your enemies, and pray for them who persecute you,” and more so, having the “mind of Jesus Christ.”

Conclusion

In sum, to participate in prophetic civic engagement, the person must have first and foremost have “a mind to work.” Using the New Testament text Phil 2:5, in combination with the Old Testament text Neh. 4:6, all the men in my project should maintain the mind of Christ in order for the work to be meaningful. In doing so, first, the persons should have as their focus the “least of these” in light of Matthew 25 and be “with one accord” as in Acts 5:12. The mind to work should be undergirded by compassion for the oppressed such as those illustrated in Matt. 9:36. Finally, in order to complete the above expressed project, one must have a strong Christ-like “love” for one’s enemies, as Matt. 5:44–45 reads, for they could be the very people who need this ministry the most. Having established a firm biblical foundation, it is my goal now to transition to laying a solid theological one.

Theological Foundation for Prophetic Civic Engagement

At this particular juncture, I will demonstrate the theological underpinnings of my project related to prophetic civic engagement for St. Paul. Throughout the annals of theological literature, there are many theologians who have written on the topic of Christian activism. Henceforth, I will offer some systematic theologies that support this project, as well as to provide some theologians and their arguments in opposition.

Liberation Theology

A key theology that buttresses significantly my project of prophetic civic involvement is liberation theology. Providentially, this theology came into being because both Catholic and Protestant ministers and theologians joining together ecumenically in Petropolis, Brazil, to speak prophetically about the condition of the poor in Latin America.²⁸ They sought to address the dismal predicament of the indigent and challenge structural institutions that were either complicit or responsible for the great inequality of wealth in Latin America; hence, those in attendance sought to have a “critical reflection on praxis.”²⁹

In 2013, I endeavored to bring Christians together once more in Mobile, Alabama, to provide prophetic voices and willing hands. Such an arduous task was undergone for the purpose of engaging people in society to help shape civics in a manner better

²⁸ Lewis Mudge, “Liberation Theology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 3:259.

²⁹ Ibid.

reflecting the love God has for humanity. Within the scope of issues that overwhelmingly relate to the poor and oppressed people, this work was initiated.

Liberation theology did not resonate in the modern world until the mid- to late-1960s, being articulated most prominently in the Roman Catholic Church by Gustavo Gutiérrez. In fact, his book *A Theology of Liberation* is, to my mind, a how-to guide for believers in taking action on behalf of the poor;³⁰ the book has become a credo statement for what liberation theology truly is.

Gutiérrez identifies two key perceptions which shape the book and have served as fundamental principles in Liberation theology ever since: first, a theological method in which theology is always a “second act” after a commitment to liberation; and secondly, the need to make an “option for the poor” and articulate theology from the perspective of the oppressed.³¹

Liberation theology, then, speaks, “of God and Jesus as liberators of the poor and oppressed and insists that justice and spirituality work hand in hand.”³² The Triune God is seen through the lens of a liberation theologian to be the Great Emancipator of those who are indigent and exploited. Liberation theology is about the business of setting free people, who are enslaved both physically and spiritually, by the liberating Word of God. It has, in the words of Jesus Christ, a strong preference for “the least of these” enumerated in Matt 25:40, seeking to encourage its adherents to take cognizant action on behalf of the indigent. There is a strong emphasis on praxis and radically changing, or eliminating, structures that support injustice. Pastors are called upon in this theology to

³⁰ Gutiérrez.

³¹ Stanley E. Porter and David Tombs, *Approaches to New Testament Study*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 120 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 314–15.

³² Mudge, 3:259.

take leadership roles in their context to seek to bring about a comprehensive transformation with spiritual and practical ramifications.

Yet, it is not only pastors who are so called upon. From theologians, to pastors, to the laity, believers who embrace a redemptive spiritual understanding of Scripture and exercise a practical application of its principles use liberation theology as the backbone of their civic activism. This theology reflects on actions that are clearly manifested in my project, such as “the experiences of women and men who assume co-responsibility with God for their liberation.”³³ Shouldering the collective co-responsibility by proponents of liberation theology signifies how they do not simply wait on certain things to happen, allowing time to take its course. Instead, liberation theology holds Christians responsible to being either “hot or cold” in this world, active or inactive.³⁴ The choice this theology offers to believers is either to stand up for righteousness or sit down and complacently live in a world saturated with unrighteousness.

Several biblical texts are used to advance the tenets of liberation theology. The text most often used is Matthew 25, wherein Jesus instructs his followers to provide for the least in property, power and prestige by feeding, giving drink, inviting strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned. Considering the work liberation theologians advocate and do, indubitably, they strive to fulfill the didactic lesson given to them from their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Gutierrez was the first to present the theology and a list of its comprehensive central creeds, but others were soon to follow his lead.³⁵ The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) supported the initial theologians who laid the foundation for the tenets of liberation theology.³⁶ Following Vatican II, in 1968, the Latin American bishops met in Medellin, Columbia, for the Latin American Episcopal Council, where Gutiérrez was an advisor.³⁷ Here, the bishops promoted a campaign targeted toward to the affluent whereby they encouraged parishioners to become activists for the poor.³⁸ They also emphasized that “seeing” injustice requires “social analysis in order to uncover the root causes of exploitative institutional practice.”³⁹ The Roman Catholic Church saw itself, at this point, as a major partner in the spread of liberation theology.⁴⁰

Theologians, pastors and other believers committing themselves to liberation first shows at the heart of this theology is praxis. Inspired by God to do as Jesus Christ did performing selfless, redemptive acts on behalf of others who cannot do for themselves is the chief aim of liberation theology, and that is prior to any set method. Secondly, that the poor should never leave the central view of liberation theologians is quintessential. The

³⁵ See, e.g., Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976); and Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980).

³⁶ Mudge, 3:259.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

poor are not in the periphery but in focal perspective of this theology. As a consequence, their welfare should shape any subsequent action.⁴¹

Detractors of liberation theology are chiefly those who would like to uphold the status quo. Conservatives are predominantly antagonist of liberation theology.

The more prominent critics include Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo of Colombia, a former president of CELAM; Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, [once] head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI]; European theologians of the International Theological Commission, appointed by the Vatican; and U.S. theologians Michael Novak and James Gustafson.⁴²

Because Liberation theology strikes at the heart of the power structure in the world, greed and power-lust, it should not be a surprise that those who maintain a vested interest in maintaining their wealth are the loudest opponents of liberation theology. In order to make their rebuke of liberation theology appear substantive, theologians such as James Gustafson, a theologian and ethicist, tries to appeal to the impartiality of God.⁴³

Gustafson finds fault in the relatively new theology due to the principle of the “preferential option for the poor.”⁴⁴ He postulates that it seems to “limit God’s universal love by implying that God loves the poor more than the nonpoor.”⁴⁵

I disagree with Gustafson’s rebuttal of liberation theology on two fronts. First, I surmise Gustafson is being hypocritical. Gustafson has no problem desiring to spread the love of God to the rich, something that is true and needed, but we must not forget to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 261–62.

⁴³ Ibid., 262.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

spread the earthly creations of God, such as food, water, and gold, to the poor. Surely, they are entitled to God's love and some abundance because God created this world for everyone, not just the rich, for God loves everybody. Pope Francis would most probably argue that Catholics such as Gustafson are guilty of sociological reductionism, whereby they only seek to reduce the social ramifications of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to an inner self-awareness and improvement exercise. The Pope argues (and I agree) that Jesus was a transformational figure who actively sought and performed acts that uplifted the poor.⁴⁶

Focusing on the poor does not "limit God's universal love" but instead expresses it. God loves everyone the same but the Creator's Word is replete with references to those who believe in God that they should support the poor and not oppress them. Liberation theology was formed to encourage other believers to adhere fully to these instructions from God. Seeking to provide relief for the poor should not be misconstrued as meaning God loves the poor more than the "nonpoor." That, stance is frankly, incongruous. For example, parents with two children, one who has a disability and the other who does not, have to live with the dynamic of showing love in different ways every day. In order to adequately and effectively raise the child with the disability that they might have as functional a life as possible, they may have to spend more time and resources on the child with the disability than on the child who does not have one. Is this a reflection of the parent's degree of love for each child? No, it is simply an act that is needed in order for the child with the disability to reach their full potential. Likewise, groups who fight, based on their Christian convictions, for funding for research into cures, resources and

⁴⁶ Andrea Torielli, "Francis' Message to CELAM: Bishops and Priests Should Not 'Infantalize' Lay Faithful." *Vatican Insider*, July, 28, 2013, accessed on November 27, 2013, <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/news/detail/articolo/26808/>.

structural change to help make sure that such a disabled child can reach their full potential are not guilty of promoting a God who does not care about children with no disability. These groups are simply trying to make sure that all are well. The above said groups, in the hypothetical, could also be practitioners of liberation theology because the theology is not just limited to aiding the poor but all oppressed and exploited people everywhere. I disagree with Gustafson because he equates love with focus, or attention, while the essence of liberation theology does not deny love to anyone. Instead, it espouses the giving of special attention to those in our society who are the “least of these.” In the end, liberation theology does not present a distorted view of God’s love as Gustafson suggests. In contrast, it contends that it is imperative to show the love of God to those whom society does not. Such a compassionate act does not take away love for the “nonpoor”; rather, it encourages those of us to give love by meaningful need-based action to those who have not received it.

John Wesley, theologian and founder of the Methodist movement, expressed eloquently the necessity of articulating a philosophy of having a preferential option for the poor. In one of Wesley’s most prolific sermons, “A Sign of the Times,” he says,

And surely never in any age or nation, since the Apostles, have those words been so eminently fulfilled, “the poor have the gospel preached unto them,” as it is at this day . . . Religion must not go from the greatest to the least, or the power would appear to be of men.⁴⁷

Wesley, the noted “theologian of experience,”⁴⁸ does not comprehend that speaking on behalf of the poor and championing the need to visit them is antithetical to the universal

⁴⁷ Jennings, 49. For a full copy of the sermon, see John Wesley, “The Signs of the Times,” Bible Hub, accessed March 31, 2014, http://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/wesley/the_signs_of_the_times.htm.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 53.

love of God as Gustafson would imply but is, rather, confirmed by Scripture. Wesley, once pontificated,

I find time to visit the sick and the poor; and I must do it, if I believe the Bible And he warned that the rich would learn that they should have “constantly” visited the poor “in that day when every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.”⁴⁹

Gustafson might also want to review this sermon since it sheds more light on just why there is an ardent desire within the body of Christ to target specifically the poor.

Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo is another harsh critique of liberation. He became the president of the Pontifical Council of the Family and was a staunch opponent of liberation theology. Trujillo argued that it “reduces faith to politics by emphasizing earthly transformation over transcendent reality and spiritual growth.”⁵⁰ His sentiment expressed as researched-based opinion is misleading and false. Faith cannot be reduced to politics but one’s politics, if it is to be meaningful, must have longevity, be fruitful, and rise above being a monotonous exercise in a social experiment. It should be based on one’s faith.

An effective political viewpoint could most assuredly rise from one’s faith. Politics can cause one to question one’s faith in an effort to gain more insight. For example, when new issues arise, such as cloning, stem cell research and the like, these questions should cause believers to research and discover what their faith teaches on that particular topic. Such research is not an expression of doubt but, rather, is the exercise of our God-given reason in the context of faith. Similarly, one’s faith should always cause

⁴⁹ Ibid, 54.

⁵⁰ Mudge, 3:262.

one to question one's political stances. A person's core beliefs, which for believers ought to involve wholly their faith, should cause one, at least occasionally, to examine one's other more lightly-held views, such as politics. Liberation theology does not equate faith to politics; it merely suggest if one has faith, then that faith ought be expressed in one's public political positions toward poor and oppressed people. Nevertheless, it falls far from putting "earthly transformation over transcendent reality and spiritual growth."⁵¹ Instead, as a direct correlation to one's spiritual growth, liberation theology proposes that one should desire to transform this earth to the Glory of God. Trujillo's critique of liberation theology fails and, if thought through, would not have been raised by such a learned man. Issues of wealth and power were obviously at the forefront in his work.

The next accusation charged against practitioners of liberation theology is that they "uncritically employ Marxist concepts, especially that of class struggle, which pits the poor against the rich."⁵² Gutiérrez responds to this line of thought by highlighting that liberation theology is not based on Marxist principles but on the simple observation that occurs when someone with a compassionate heart is spiritual moved and quicken by the Holy Spirit once they see or hear about oppression in the world. By authentic observation, believers can indeed see that charity alone toward the poor will not now, or ever, work. What the poor need above and beyond charity is justice, as Gutierrez argues.⁵³ The poor desperately need a form of justice today that asks, "Why are there so many poor people? What structures are there which promote and profit from this wicked

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

sinister cycle?”⁵⁴ These questions when asked and studied will, I believe, prompt people to true prophetic civic engagement. Again, such action is not based on Marxist principles but on a serious and sustained observation of one’s community with a compassionate heart.⁵⁵

Black Theology

Another theology that supports foundationally my project of prophetic civic engagement is black theology. It is very similar to liberation theology. In fact, black theology is a form of Liberation Theology and actually pre-dates the Latin American form. Where liberation theology emerged out of a Latin American experience, black liberation theology emerged out of the African American experience in the United States. James H. Cone is black theology’s first contributor, founder, and major proponent. In his book *Black Theology and Black Power*, which was originally a lecture given in 1969, Cone postulates a view of Scripture from the perspective of blacks.⁵⁶ In black theology, the “corporate experience of African Americans becomes the interpretive lens for reading Scripture and writing theology.”⁵⁷ Cone believes theology should come from one’s experience or context and that the theology that has been handed to African Americans originally derived from their oppressors.⁵⁸ Cone goes on to proclaim that God identifies

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997.

⁵⁷ Helifield, 3:780.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

with blacks because of the oppression they undergo: “To be Christian is to be one of those whom God has chosen. God has chosen black people!”⁵⁹ In his highly scrutinized essay, *God is black*. Cone seeks to answer the questions of what role did the Christian God, the God of Moses, Jesus, and Paul, have to play in the Black freedom struggle?⁶⁰ Here, he addresses this notion with somewhat of an evangelical and didactic motif. Cone says that he

wants to demonstrate that the God of the Christian gospels was not white as most Christians and non-Christians, even in the Black community, seemed to believe I was determined to show, using the intellectual tools whites had taught me in seminary, that “God is Black,” not just because African Americans are Black, but because God freely chooses to be known as the One who liberates victims from their oppression.⁶¹

Being black, according to Cone is more than just skin color; it is also an experiential suffering, victimization, oppression, and exploitation by oppressors in society based on reasons that are beyond one’s control. It was this message of good news to the marginalized and abused in the context of St. Paul A.M.E. Church that I hoped to bring through my project. The understanding that whether one is black, white, male, or female, if one is suffering and in need of victory, God is your God and God can bring liberation from whatever situation, circumstance or person has one bound.

In an age where the prosperity gospel saturates the television screens, persons speaking from the pulpit are confusing people who are living a pious life, but yet can barely keep the lights on. Liberation theology teaches them that it is not because of some

⁵⁹ Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 139–40.

⁶⁰ Helifield, 3:780; cf. Cone, “God is Black,” 101.

⁶¹ Helifield, 3:780.

deficit of faith on their part that causes them to be poor. Rather, human, sinful social conditions control their poverty. To people in this and similar circumstances, I wanted to share the fact that God identifies with them. I, and like-minded Christians, wish to work to change a system, wherein a full-time job can leave one still barely be able to provide for the family.

There have been several articles recently on black theology. The renewed interest came during the Democratic presidential primary and later the general election in November 2008 when an ABC News story provoked a controversy concerning some out-of-context sermon remarks made by the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, who was, at the time, pastor of then Senator Barack Obama.⁶² Videotapes of Rev. Wright's sermons were later released. While controversy did not prevent Barack Obama from becoming the first African American president, it did fuel the fire of many political pundits who desperately wanted to depict him as radical and, thus, less appealing to voters. In order to do this, there was an intense campaign in 2008 to denigrate and demean black liberation theology.

President Obama's adversaries failed to defeat him in November 2008, but they did succeed in some measure to cast black liberation theology as a socialist, unorthodox religious practice that promotes violence and uses the Bible for its own political and socio-economic agenda. Knowing full well these political commentators act more like political instigators than news reporters, I will now still address their critiques of black liberation theology.

⁶² For further on the material that began the controversy, see Brian Ross and Rehab el-Buri, "Obama's Pastor: God Damn America, U.S. to Blame for 9/11," *ABC News*, March 13, 2008, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4443788>.

As to black liberation theology promoting socialism, my position is the same as it was to Latin American liberation theology, with just one distinction: black theology came out of an experience where blacks were denied all rights—social, political, and fundamental. For Cone to espouse uplift for this particular group of people is, in my opinion is not advocacy of socialism but democratic justice. It is about correcting the gross injustices done to a group of people for over hundreds of years. It is not about socialism but correcting the ills of capitalist inspired slavery. Nowhere in Cone's writing, or in the civil rights movement that brought it about, was there any solicitation for a total leveling of the economic playing field or any "extra" rights. The civil right leaders only wanted the same legal rights and economic opportunities as whites were afforded. Cone uses the term "self-determination," signifying that blacks want to be able to determine for themselves what they choose to be in life.

The black theologian must reject any conception of God which stifles black self-determination by picturing God as a God of all peoples. Either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God's experience, or God is a God of racism...The blackness of God means that God has made the oppressed condition God's own condition. This is the essence of the Biblical revelation. By electing Israelite slaves as the people of God and by becoming the Oppressed One in Jesus Christ, the human race is made to understand that God is known where human beings experience humiliation and suffering Liberation is not an afterthought, but the very essence of divine activity.⁶³

For that to become a reality, they should receive the same basic rights and opportunities that other Americans enjoy.

The insincerity exhibited by the adversaries of black theology is unfathomable. Where is the outcry when corporations are treated with socialist principles, such as the

⁶³ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 20th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 63–64.

TARP bailout⁶⁴ (many complain now, but, at the time it was introduced, most were for it), subsidies to big business, the country's tax code as it relates to the rich, and states that receive far more from the federal government than they pay in taxes to it. Only when policies seem to have specific positive impact on blacks or other marginalized groups do these critiques from the likes of Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity, and Rush Limbaugh, not to mention a host of other commentators and politicians, seem to find their voice.

Next there is a critique that black liberation theology encourages violence. Of all the critiques stated, this one is furthest from the truth. Black theology calls for attacking wicked social teachings and practices and correcting them. It seeks to organize against oppressive institutions for rights deserved by all. Yet, calls for violence of a physical nature are completely discouraged by black liberation theology or Cone specifically. Both the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X were great inspirations to James Cone in creating the concept for black theology. "The ministry of Martin King shows Cone that no interpretation of the Christian faith could be valid without an engagement of the issues of justice in the society and the world. King, a major inspiration of Cone, utilized the Gospel of Jesus Christ in his ministry of service to the people. His theology was based, not from a professor's office in academia, though he was well-learned and could have taught anywhere in the world. No, the Rev. King's theology was seen on the streets and in the community; it was about organizing people based on the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, which shaped his theology. "He allowed theology to serve the needs of the

⁶⁴ *Troubled Asset Relief Program*, Public Law 110-343, *U. S. Statutes at Large* 122 (2008): 3765, enacted October 3, 2008.

church and to provide the basis for leading oppressed people out of bondage.”⁶⁵ Malcolm X teaches Cone that he could not be a human being without accepting himself as a black person,”⁶⁶ but that has nothing to do with perpetrating physical violence against anyone.

Another point where King and Cone agree is concerning sin. They see sin as being both “personal and social; the tendency to accentuate the private and personal dimensions of sin tends to ignore the social and historical aspect of it, which is expressed in oppressive structures and the exploitation of people and their domination by institutions and groups.”⁶⁷ Viewing sin as only personal in nature ignores the harsh realities of the evil that institutional systems can perpetuate. Astonishingly, while the Supreme Court gives corporations the rights of people, and presidential candidates like Mitt Romney declare them to be people, some theologians and Christians do not want to admit there is something called public or societal sin. Sodom and Gomorrah were judged due to their “social sin” (Gen. 19:1–29). The book of Revelation relates repeatedly that churches and societies will be judged based on what they did or failed to do. It is amply clear that there is such a thing as social sin. Walter Rauschenbusch in his articulation of the social gospel⁶⁸ plays a central role in establishing this fact for King.⁶⁹ Noel Leo

⁶⁵ Noel Leo Erskine, *King Among the Theologians* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1994), 131.

⁶⁶ Helifield, 3:780.

⁶⁷ Erskine, 129.

⁶⁸ See further, e.g., Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1907); and idem, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1917).

⁶⁹ Erskine, 130. Among Martin Luther King’s papers is an outline of the work of Walter Rauschenbusch written by Cal Marques, on which King has written notes about democracy, economics, and Christianity (Cal Marques, “Walter Rauschenbusch,” *The King Center Digital Archive*, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/essay-walter-rauschenbusch#>).

Erskine states in this light, “Christian theology has to take seriously the principalities and powers and the manifestation of wickedness in high places So for both Cone and King, sin builds up corporate structures of alienation and oppression that a person may not be able to overcome as an individual.”⁷⁰

Conclusion

Cone offers a challenge for most conscientious black preachers who know their history and the current state of the black community. “How can I be both Black and Christian at the same time?”⁷¹ By answering this question, Cone came up with black theology. When I answered this question personally, I discovered the principles that later led to the topic of my project, that is, prophetic civic engagement where the children of God can unite to recognize corporate sin, mobilize collectively in a godly manner to ensure the wicked practices and institutions are annihilated, or at least brought to light, thereby combatting oppressive structures and practices. Such is the goal for this project of prophetic civic engagement. It sought to draw upon both Latin American liberation theology and U. S. black liberation theology in forming the model for engagement that best met the need of my context at St. Paul; indeed, my approach borrowed mightily from the principles outlined in liberation theology and black theology. I would like to state one disclaimer, however, at this point: that is, I do not agree wholesale with everything articulated in these theologies. For instance, I continue to assert that God exists above all human categories: race, gender, and status. With that said, these two theologies best

⁷⁰ Erskine, 129–30.

⁷¹ Cone, “God is Black,” 101.

represent my beliefs because it is undeniable that God has revealed through Jesus Christ and the Bible that assisting the meek, poor, suffering is an imperative. God does uniquely watch over the oppressed, and Jesus clearly tells us to take care of those in our midst who are without. Throughout this project, I depended upon these comprehensive and systematic theologies, as I often had to defend my actions against those who did not agree with the principle that Christians should be engaged in civics.

Historical Foundation for Prophetic Civic Engagement

I next examine persons throughout history who have waged campaigns to involve others in prophetic civil engagement. In addition to the biblical and theological foundations for prophetic civic engagement, during my project I leaned on these stalwart figures in history, who have exhibited monumental leadership in this area. In each era of the history of Christianity we can find an inspired, conscientious person who speaks unabashedly to and engages prophetically with the lives of the community from a Christ-centered perspective. Thus, prophetic Christian civic engagement travels as far back as the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ. He was captured as a political prisoner because he defied the status quo and undermined both Jewish and Roman authorities by proclaiming the truth. Jesus' model of civic engagement has been mirrored by many of his followers. I maintain here that the historical Christian roots of prophetic civic engagement are many.

The Early Christian Martyrs

The early church, in large part because of its unique teachings and practices, was constantly bombarded with persecution. Those brave men and women who were killed are today considered martyrs. These remarkable early church leaders suffered brutal deaths just because they chose to get engaged in their society by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ that some souls might be saved.

Most of the prophetic activism of early Christians particularly in places like Rome engaged in civil disobedience.⁷² Authentic early Christians refused to partake in ceremonies and sacrifices in honor of the emperor or their countries many gods. Unfortunately, in Roman society to be an adherent of the country's main religion was seen as an act of patriotism. To not acquiescence to the demands of the culture and be included in the country's worship activities, therefore, was, at best, seen with suspicion and, at worst, treasonous.⁷³ To preach about religion and to proclaim that only members of one's faith are saved and in right relationship with God was seen by the Roman authorities as being unpatriotic, and/or blasphemous to the majority's state-sponsored religion. Not to venerate the emperor, or whomever his representative commanded one to worship, was an affront to the emperor, law, and culture. It was understood socially by the masses, who did adhere to the state-sponsored religion, as an act of perceived spiritual superiority. Politically, it comprehended as unpatriotic; and, legally, it was treasonous. Public confession of Christian faith in the polytheistic Roman Empire was a crime punishable by a horrendous public death, most often by crucifixion, being burned alive,

⁷² Ferguson, 64.

⁷³ Ibid., 67.

fighting animals, being beheaded, to just name a few. As a result, several of the Apostles, Stephen, Ignatius, Polycarp, all exiled and/or killed by the governing officials because they dared to prophetically speak out to the community based on their religious convictions.⁷⁴

Stephen was a prophetic voice at almost the very beginning of the Christian Church. According to Acts 6:3, an inequity in regard to treatment of the Hellenistic Jews versus the Hebraic Jews led the Apostles to select “seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” Stephen was one of the men they selected and was known for being “full of faith and filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5). Stephen, the newly minted community organizer for the followers of the Way, was additionally among the first to become civically involved in the life of his community. He and six others were charged with giving meals to widows, specifically the Hellenistic women who were being neglected in that societally necessary administration of benevolence (6:1–5). Then, Stephen also did miraculous acts before the people (6:8). Repeatedly, he was questioned by those in leadership (6:9–10). Never could they overcome Stephen’s knowledge and wisdom or entrap him. Tragically, Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin council for the false allegation of blaspheming (6:11). Not deterred in what would be Stephen’s last speech, he proclaimed the validity of Christ and how Jesus is the focal point within the narrative of the history of Israel (7:2–53). Because the leadership of the council loathed to hear this aggravating truth, they stoned Stephen (7:54–58). He dared speak verity to them about the deeds of their ancestors up to the present day, and he died for it. Because of his bravery in publically challenging the laws

⁷⁴ Ibid, 66–69.

and cultural standards of his time, standing up for the gospel, Stephen became the first martyr in this new religion, created after its founder Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross, buried, and, on the third day, arose.

The life of Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, is another example of someone during the age of the early church who was martyred because of their beliefs and activism. In an effort to appease a riotous mob's thirst for Christian blood, and a weak government more concerned with assuaging the anger of the people than upholding what is right, a search crew was sent to capture Polycarp. He was sought because he was, by far, the most visible Christian in Asia Minor at that time.⁷⁵ Polycarp adamantly preached in the name of Jesus Christ and was devout in his service to the Lord. He neither bowed down to Caesar nor burned incense in honor of him. Polycarp's actions, or the lack thereof, was taken as an offense against the crown; and he was charged as an atheist and sentenced to death unless he recanted and pronounced Caesar as lord. Once captured, Polycarp graciously offered his captors food and treated them with the upmost kindness. When taken before the proconsul, Polycarp was given the opportunity to be spared if he professed his allegiance to Caesar and publically condemn Christ. Polycarp passionately spoke words that later became famous, "Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my Savior and King?"⁷⁶ For such radical heroism, Polycarp was burned at the stake.⁷⁷ Due to Polycarp's unwavering faith in Christ and his insistence, even in the face of death, to speak prophetically to the Roman

⁷⁵ Bettenson and Maunder, 9.

⁷⁶ Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews, James*, Holman New Testament Commentary 10 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 199.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Empire, later Christianity has yet another voice from the early church period to draw upon as a foundation for prophetic civic involvement.

Following the era of Christian persecution at the hands of the Roman emperors, Constantine became sole emperor of the Roman Empire, having dispatched others with claims to the Imperial crown, and changed the course of Christian history, although change was in the air before Constantine consolidated his rule. Galerius, one of three co-emperors after Diocletian abdicated the throne, had been one of the key perpetrators of Diocletian's "Great Persecution" of Christians. Admitting that the effort was failing, he issued, shortly before his death in 311, the Edict of Toleration that promotes tolerance of all religions and, essentially, put an end to state sponsored killings of Christians.⁷⁸ Galerius said in the Edict: "Wherefore, for this our indulgence, they ought to pray to their God for our safety, for that of the republic, and for their own, that the republic may continue uninjured on every side, and that they may be able to live securely in their homes."⁷⁹ Then, while in battle against Maxentius, a pretender to Galerius' co-emperorship, Constantine experienced several visions given to him from God. The messages of these vivid and unforgettable images are credited to have helped Constantine win many important battles in securing his kingdom and reign against Maxentius. In 313, Constantine then met with his co-emperor Licinius in Milan. The two of them enhanced Galerius' edict by expanding the rights of citizens of Rome "granting all persons the

⁷⁸ C. Hicks, "Constantine the Great," in *Who's Who in Christian History*, eds. J. D. Douglas and Philip Wesley Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 172.

⁷⁹ Galerius, "Galerius and Constantine: Edicts of Toleration 311/313: Edict of Toleration," ch. 34, *Internet Medieval Source Book, Fordham University*, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/edict-milan.asp>.

freedom to follow whichever religion they wished,” in the Edict of Milan⁸⁰ After a series of civil war battles with Licinius, Constantine became the sole emperor of Rome. Then, Constantine became the first ruler of Rome to convert to Christianity.⁸¹

The Edict of Milan and Emperor Constantine’s conversion to Christianity immensely transformed the new religion. No longer were Christians on the run, fleeing from the authorities; the church, for all intents and purposes, became the authority after Constantine’s conversion. He, as ruler of Rome and essentially the European-known world, sought to make sure his newfound religion had all its beliefs solidified without inconsistency. Hence, he called for a council at Nicaea, in 325, where all the bishops of the Christian faith would come and establish what Scriptures, beliefs, and practices would be upheld in the Christian church. It was to be the first of the great Ecumenical Councils of the church.

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, and the Council of Nicaea

Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, is our next historical figure who practiced prophetic civic involvement. His import is clear against the backdrop of Constantine’s efforts to give Christianity official status in the Roman Empire. During the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, Athanasius stood his ground by arguing prophetically for the greatest prophet whom ever lived, Jesus Christ. At this meeting, Athanasius vehemently spoke against Arius, who was a leading proponent of the view that Jesus was not of the same source as the God the Father. Literally, the distinction Arius made involved adding an “I”

⁸⁰ Hicks, 173.

⁸¹ Ibid., 172–73.

to the word *homoousious*, which means “of the same substance,”⁸² which was Athanasius’ position. Though Arians followers supported other terms such *homoeans*, and *anomeans*, the term they upheld overwhelming in their animated discourse with Athanasius’ and his supporters was *homoiosious*, which means “of similar substance.” While the difference only is in one letter, the significance of the change is extremely great.⁸³ Athanasius won the day, and the orthodox position is now that Jesus and the Father (as well as the Holy Spirit) are of one substance, that is, “consubstantial.” Yet, the heresy of Arius was not to disappear quickly. The Arians were so powerful, in fact, that they were effective in getting Athanasius expelled from the church five times. Nonetheless, he never faltered and continued to be prophetically involved in the church community standing on what the Scriptures teach about Jesus, which is that He is God in the flesh. The stance Athanasius took advocating for what he believed in against the powerful Arius sect is admirable. In the end, Athanasius was so outspoken and went up against the elite leaders of his time so often that at his death, friends provided this epitaph: “Athanasius against the World.”⁸⁴

Joan of Arc and the Medieval Church

As time went by the Christian Church grew to massive proportions, and suffering a major schism with Eastern churches based out of Constantinople, called the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the remaining church based in Rome, the Roman Catholic Church.

⁸² Ferguson, 201.

⁸³ Ibid., 202.

⁸⁴ Ted Cabal, *The Apologetics Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1783.

Furthermore, many battles were waged over holy lands such as long and protracted wars known as the Crusades, where Christians and Muslims fought over much of the land in Northern East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.⁸⁵ Jerusalem was lost to Muslim forces in this war. Still though, the church further solidified the West as its primary base of operation with their headquarters in the Vatican. Land was the new premium in this feudal society and countries sought to expand.⁸⁶

This situation gave impetus to another person who got prophetically involved to defend her country.⁸⁷ This young lady only loved one thing more than her country, God. Her name is Jeanne la Pucelle, but she is known today as Joan of Arc.⁸⁸ A Christian mystic who stated she had a vision as a child where the archangel Michael, as well as saints of the Catholic Church, Margaret and Catherine spoke to her.⁸⁹ In this divine encounter Joan of Arc received a prophetic commission. “They told her she must go to aid France’s king in the struggle against England.”⁹⁰ Obeying this heavenly call, Joan of Arc became civically involved in her region of the world. As a young woman, she approached the king about her desire to fight. After successfully dealing with political pressure and obstacles she was given charge over the king’s troops and won battles against the English in her quest to free her homeland from their foreign tyrannical power.

⁸⁵ Cross and Livingstone, 439–40, 883.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 883–84.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ A. Cabaniss, “Joan of Arc,” in *Who’s Who in Christian History*, eds. J. D. Douglas and Philip Wesley Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 369.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Joan of Arc was eventually captured by the English and tried on the charge of sorcery. She was burned alive, and reportedly her last words were “Jesus, Jesus.”⁹¹

Martin Luther and the Reformation

Due to the power, wealth, and prestige of the Roman Catholic Church, it grew to have an incestuous relationship with the government. They both seemed to be an extension of the other. Greed had begun to take root in the church, along with the sense of invisibility. A new level of comfort for church leaders which prior had never existed for this once publicly scorned group of believers.⁹² With the recent material success and cultural acceptance, spiritual arrogance and societal elitism crept into the Church. At that moment, the administration of the church morphed, in large part, into an entity that was alien to its roots; and some Christians, who were still led by the Holy Spirit and became the prophetic wing of the Church, began to be offended. Consequently, the places of protest or civic engagement were no longer the arenas of Rome and became less even the public squares. The halls of the Christian universities and the places of worship were where the battle for the hearts and minds of the church were fought.⁹³

It is within this context that the next person who got involved in prophetic civic engagement appears. Martin Luther was born into a world where the Roman Catholic Church had seemingly complete autonomy. The lines between the church and state were vague at best and synonymous at worse. Luther grew up and studied in Germany. He

⁹¹ Ibid., 370.

⁹² Cross and Livingstone, 883.

⁹³ Ibid.

became a Catholic monk and later a priest. Luther taught as a professor at Wittenberg University. While Martin disdained the school of Scholasticism, he indeed was a scholar and an exceptional theologian.⁹⁴

The year 1517 was quite a busy one for Luther. During this year, he publicly confronted two of the most influential spheres of the western world of that time. After studying logic, reason and ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, Luther concluded that reason cannot prove God and is, thus, limited to only discussing earthly matters. Making that sentiment known in a much broader yet precise mode he “advanced 97 theses against scholastic theology. These were followed, in October, by his 95 theses ‘on the power and efficacy of indulgences,’ which were soon disseminated throughout the empire.”⁹⁵ The latter exercise in prophetic civic engagement caused Luther to undergo ecclesiastical punishment. Though his 95 Theses were meant as a way of seeking more understanding and not as a method to cause the church to split, For Luther, the church was distracted; its leaders thought it more efficacious to sell indulgences for the building of grand basilicas than to spread the true Word of the Lord, Although Luther was not without his faults, God used him to call people’s attention to the truth of the gospels and the sufficiency of the Scriptures.⁹⁶ Martin was excommunicated from the Catholic Church following a series of statements he made against the pope and the Catholic Church’s practice of selling indulgences. Luther, however, persisted and began what historians call the Reformation or the beginning of the Protestant movement, which has brought many to, or

⁹⁴ Scott Hendrix. “Luther’s Theology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 3:370–71.

⁹⁵ Lotz, 3:346.

⁹⁶ Ferguson, 5:415.

closer to, Christ.⁹⁷ Protestantism is a movement within the body of Christ chiefly defined by the simple teaching that all one needs is faith alone to be saved; works are not relevant for salvation but are, instead, the fruits of salvation. Many of the denominations formed, however, still have some similarity to Catholicism, partly because Luther's reform movement and those who supported it desired to recover and preserve the best of Catholic Christianity.⁹⁸ My initiative to establish a prophetically engaged band of Christian believers who would "protest" the dismally alarming conditions that the community of St. Paul currently finds itself is appropriate to the spirit of protest fantastically demonstrated in this era.

John Wesley and the British Reformation: Challenges to the Status Quo

Following Luther's reform, which dealt a momentous political blow to the Roman Catholic Church, another blow was given in a different European country, and this time by a monarch. This second instance came when King Henry VIII of England and the British Parliament broke allegiance with the pope and passed the Act of Supremacy. Such a historical deed outlined the king as leader of the church second only to Christ, thereby forming the Church of England or Anglican Church. Within this denomination the next person in history who pronounced prophetic civic engagement with his ministry was baptized, that is John Wesley.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Lotz, 3:346.

⁹⁸ Hendrix, 3:374.

⁹⁹ Cross and Livingstone, 1571.

At a moment of great spiritual aridity within the Anglican Church, a growing moral depravity in English society, virtually no financial safety for the poor, and an expanding slave trade, John Wesley was someone who was inspired by God to become prophetically civically involved. Besides being an ordained clergy in the Anglican Church, Wesley had an immense educational background and was a member of a talented family. He and his brother Charles Wesley, the great songwriter, formed the “Holy Club” to counter the dryness, spiritual apostasy, and lack of community concern they both witnessed in the Anglican Church. Their group, which consisted of Anglicans and non-Anglicans alike, would meet on a regular basis for prayer, song, Scripture reading, spiritual accountability, and to collect offerings that were to be used to help the poor. People took note and derogatorily referred to the Holy Club as those “Methodist” because of its theological method and its systematic approach to the building up of the person and church, as well as its missionary work; ergo, the Methodist movement began. In order to address the ethical decaying of society, Wesley took to open air preaching. A practice similar to that which was done by the early prophets who carried their message to the highways, byways, marketplace, street corners, and open fields proclaiming the Word of God.

Wesley got prophetically civically involved there when he began to speak out against avarice and the institution of slavery. Slavery had existed in England since the mid 1500s and was a regular institution by the time Wesley was born in 1703. Suffice it to say, slavery was a crucial part of England’s so called “civilized” society. Wesley actively deplored slavery, saying in one of his addresses about the slave trade, “Never was anything such a reproach to England since it was a nation, as the having any hand in

this execrable traffic.”¹⁰⁰ Wesley, being a prophetic civic engager, vehemently denounced it as a cruel and demeaning affront to God-given human rights, personal liberty and dignity.¹⁰¹ Such a stance was extremely rare in England. Undoubtedly, Wesley can be credited as one of a few abolitionist leaders who helped solidify the movement in England. This, in turn, eventually led to the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which abolished the slave trade in the United Kingdom and larger British Empire. Ultimately, the work of Wesley and others originated the abolitionist campaign in England that brought about the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, just 42 years after Wesley’s death, which abolished all forms of slavery in the British Empire.¹⁰² Wesley also took this approach with him on his voyage to the New World, namely, Savannah, Georgia.

Wesley spoke out against slavery in the same vein as the prophet Amos spoke out against the atrocities of Israel. Highlighting the hypocrisy of Judah and Israel when they boast of their sacrifices, Amos proclaimed that Israel did not return to God. The church during the time of Wesley was experiencing a so-called “Great Awakening,” while, simultaneously, the Atlantic slave trade was reaching its peak. Wesley, a devout Christian, articulated that Christians were the root cause of slavery taking hold in the Western world. Wesley stressed that Africans had “strong civilizations with peaceable, prosperous, and decent populations. But this happy picture is soon marred by the arrival

¹⁰⁰ Jennings, 85.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, 85–87.

of – Christians! ‘The Christians, landing upon their coasts, seized as many as they found, men, women and children, and transported them to America.’”¹⁰³

I believe Wesley’s hostility towards slavery derived from another great passion of his, the welfare of the poor. The primary objective for taking up offerings when the Holy Club met was to have some funds to distribute to the poor. I suppose Wesley knew that the poor could use still more, but he saw the necessity of doing something to help. Even though Wesley, unlike progressive liberal thinkers of his time, was decidedly pro-monarchy, he was, nonetheless, staunchly opposed to greed and the preferential treatment of the wealthy. Wesley’s philosophy placed him in stark contrast with those who thought the acquisition of riches was the epitome of life and the chief end of the gospel of Christ. He disdained any wealth obtained at the expense of exploiting others. One of my favorite quotes from Wesley is, “Better is honest poverty, than all the riches bought by the tears, and sweat, and blood of our fellow-creatures.”¹⁰⁴ Likewise, Wesley was against any attempt to equate the possession of riches to being a holy, righteous person before God. Needless to say, Wesley was in solidarity with the poor.¹⁰⁵ According to Theodore Jennings, Wesley used the pulpit to “demystification of wealth” through an ethic of love.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, Methodists advised the building of modest churches, “otherwise the necessity of raising money will make rich men necessary to us . . . and governed by

¹⁰³ Ibid, 83.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 85; citing John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, Section 4.6., 1774. See further John Wesley, “Thoughts Upon Slavery,” *Global Ministries: The United Methodist Church*, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/slavery/slaveryb/>.

¹⁰⁵ Jennings, 66.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. See also Howard A. Snyder, *Yes in Christ: Wesleyan Reflections on Gospel, Mission, and Culture*, Tyndale Studies in Wesleyan History and Theology 2 (Toronto, CA; Clements, 2011), 97.

them. And then farewell to the Methodist discipline, and if not doctrine too.”¹⁰⁷ Although I categorically disagree with Wesley in his support of the monarchy, I do hold the same sentiment in regard the treatment of avarice. In sum, being actively involved within the community to enhance the livelihood of those living in poverty was paramount for Wesley and his followers. John Wesley is as important of an historical figure to prophetic civic engagement as any because from “Wesley’s practice, we may learn that solidarity with the poor is not one program among others, quite the contrary, it is the norm of all activity for people called Methodists, who seek to embody scriptural Christianity.”¹⁰⁸

Richard Allen and the Founding of the A.M.E. Church

Richard Allen is the next figure who serves as a historical basis for prophetic civic engagement. After the Methodist movement took root in the “new land,” the new denomination experienced great growth. Unfortunately, as is the case for most organizations that were started with revolutionary ideals and firm biblical principles, they soon become a product of their time. Ultimately, they mirror their society instead of transforming it. Such became the fate of St. George Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Richard Allen was a minister. It was a church that practiced the same racism, segregation, and condoning of slavery that one found in the rest of that new democracy known as the United States of America, which exercised these practices in murderous, self-defeating, hypocritical ways and at an alarming pace.

¹⁰⁷ Jennings, 65; citing the *Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1787*, Sec. 27. See further Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, *A Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America for 1784*. New York, NY: Ross, 1787.

¹⁰⁸ Jennings, 66.

Born a slave in 1760, Richard Allen bought his freedom and then noted with horror what was happening in his church. He, therefore, led a new Methodist movement and, in so doing, founded the oldest predominately black Christian denomination in the world. If anyone in history exhibited prophetic civic engagement it is Richard Allen. He confessed his faith in Jesus Christ as a young man in 1777, after hearing the preaching of a Methodist preacher. He also had the wherewithal to solicit his class leader to convert his slave master Stokely Sturgis to Christianity. Eventually, Sturgis allowed him to buy both his brother's and his own freedom. Richard Allen was called into the ministry to be an itinerant preacher to blacks, and he loved the Methodist Episcopal Church. Because of his active participation in the denomination, Allen met Richard Whatcoat and Francis Asbury.¹⁰⁹

In 1786, Allen went to St. George to assist them in evangelizing the sizable black population in Philadelphia. Tragically, blacks were denied the ability to exercise the full rights of membership that whites were afforded. On a particular Sunday, blacks were in the process of praying when they were asked to stop and be removed from where they were kneeling. Afterward, Allen invited the blacks to worship in his blacksmith shop.¹¹⁰ In an effort that allowed them to get more prophetically involved in the life of the community, inspired by Christian principles, Allen formed the Free African Society. "Probably modeled on an African tradition, this society engaged in advocacy for the race, but more importantly, in mutual assistance and fraternal, lodge like fellowship."¹¹¹ The

¹⁰⁹ Newman, 43–45.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 69–73.

¹¹¹ Mitchell, 68.

Free African Society was the preeminent organization for blacks during that time. Allen left St. George and, being motivated by Christian principles, he prophetically became involved at a greater level in civic society. Likewise Absalom Jones left the Episcopal Church to join in this new prophetic cause and to create this new organization that aims to meet the needs of all God's children.

Once in the Philadelphia area, a major yellow fever outbreak erupted. There were outlandish indictments laid against blacks by a renowned white writer, Mathew Carey. He accused African Americans of pressuring people for money during such a fragile and emotionally charged time. When an episode of mass hysteria occurred and people needed someone to blame, as was the case quite often during this era, blacks bore the brunt of popular criticism. They were blamed for the yellow fever outbreak, which was somehow attributed to how they allegedly behaved. Fortunately, Allen and Jones managed to rebuke Mathew Carey for his distortions.¹¹² To his deceptive and divisive deed, Allen and Absalom Jones took issue with Carey's incorrect and broad generalizations. The two men responded by writing a pamphlet of their own. Henceforth, the "Allen and Jones' document would be the first federally copyrighted essay by African American writers."¹¹³ Not being done with using the medium of print, Allen and Jones wrote another pamphlet where they spoke in favor of ending slavery and all racial injustices. The writing can be appreciated more once it is taken into account that, at the time of Allen producing this work, Philadelphia was home to the nation's capital, where every so often the leaders of this young impressionable democracy would come legislate policy, debate bills, and

¹¹² Newman, 78.

¹¹³ Ibid.

create new departments.¹¹⁴ In writing the next pamphlet, once more Allen was prophetically inserting himself into civics by boldly speaking a word from the Lord. “As Allen puts it, the Lord ‘from time to time raise(s) up instruments’ to spread righteousness throughout the world. Allen viewed himself as just such an instrument.”¹¹⁵ In my eye there is no doubt that he was one.

Still another feat of profound foresight, and spiritual obedience Richard Allen did accomplish. He founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church, having as its first church Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Today, it is affectionately called “Mother Bethel.” In an unchristian-like hostile manner, St. George did not allow Allen or the black Methodists to leave amicably. The leaders at St. George fought them bitterly in court and physically tried to come place someone else to preach for them one Sunday after the members of Bethel already told them they were not welcome.¹¹⁶

Internally, Allen and his allies had some conflicts. He left the Free African Society over substantive disagreements with the direction in which the group was heading. Absalom Jones left from worshipping with Allen and formed an Episcopalian place of worship of his own, named St. Thomas. Then the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was the predominately white denomination and the original name of the United Methodist Church, erected a church right across the street from Bethel. Still though, Richard Allen prevailed, being undeterred, a man on a mission to make a difference in the world around him. Allen saw the African Methodist Episcopal Church as the best way

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 105.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 106.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 160.

to do that. Because of his fortitude the African Methodist Episcopal Church today stands as the oldest black denomination in the world.¹¹⁷

Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Defeat of Jim Crow

The last figure in the chronology of prophetic civic engagers is none other than arguably the most popular one of them all, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. Coming of age in the Jim Crow South, Martin King never let the current status quo of the day blur his vision for a brighter tomorrow, possessing a strong conviction of obedience toward the love of God and passionately striving for God's justice for the poor and oppressed. King accepted the belief that nonviolent civil disobedience is the most Christ-like response to the severely crippling and hateful laws, police brutality, and vitriolic statements and actions from those who wanted nothing to do with an integrated and empowered society.

King became prophetically civically involved first when Rosa Parks, a Tuskegee native and member of an A.M.E. Church in Montgomery, AL., sat down in the front of the bus after a long day's work, was told to move out of her sit and go sit in the back to make room for a white patron, but refused and was arrested. Rev. King, who was just recently hired as pastor of Dexter Avenue Missionary Baptist Church and new to Montgomery, saw the importance of joining civic organizations, such as the Montgomery Improvement Association. It was at one of their meetings where Rev. King was selected to serve as the leader of the Montgomery bus boycott. In the end, the boycott was successful when the Supreme Court mandated that the seats be desegregated. King,

¹¹⁷ Mitchell, 68.

seeing a myriad of problems in America, continued his public activism after the bus boycott. He began to speak prophetically against the inability of blacks to vote. In fact, King courageously went to Selma to march to Montgomery after an earlier attempt where the police viciously beat the marchers in what is now called “Bloody Sunday,” transpired.

An organizer par excellent, King started an ingenious apparatus that would inspire and organize Christian leaders to take a more active role in society, addressing injustices that plagued the public. The organization’s name is the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). To assist getting the Voting Rights Acts passed, Rev. King, other black politicians in Congress, and leaders from throughout the country held a march on Washington D.C. in front of the Lincoln Monument. Addressing the crowd, Dr. King famously stood on the steps of the monument and gave the later titled “I Have a Dream” speech. Subsequently, the act passed, being signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Like any soldier for God, when that battle ended, King went on to fight for another cause, peace. He spoke fearlessly against the war in Vietnam. For his opposition to the war, former allies of his, both black and white, scoffed King. His former supporters’ critique was that, after he successfully led the bus boycott and the right to vote movement, he now was trying to take on too much. Regardless of what people, including the sitting president at that time, Lyndon B. Johnson, said, King knew his first allegiance was to God and, thus, he had to be obedient to God’s voice. Rev. King’s actions prove just that.

By speaking prophetically on the war in Vietnam, Martin proved once more that he answered only to God and not humankind. He truly was a prophetic civic engager of the first order. King's example today still shows how one person who acts based on Christian values can make a major difference in their surroundings. King is in a line of African American prophetic civic engagers, such as Samuel Dewitt Proctor, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Henry McNeil Turner, and Richard Allen, to just name a few.

Conclusion

The historical figures listed in this section have laid the blueprint for what a successful framework of prophetic civic engagement might look like. I hope someday the work I did and plan to do will have as much an impact on society as all those stated above in the thesis. With God as my helper, I believe I can. How to take on such a great challenge, though, will take courage, discernment, technical planning and strategy. While the former two are more abstract, the latter two are more tangible and will be the focus of the next chapter on method.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction: Problem Statement

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodology and design of my research model performed at St. Paul A.M.E. Church. As stated previously, when I first arrived at my context, I found neither a men's ministry nor any program that focused on mentoring young males. No sense of a Christian imperative to be involved in the community existed. St. Paul's main work in the community when I became the pastor involved raising revenue. Community outreach for them was no more than a means paying the church's assessment and utility bills. The other church activity consisted only of Sunday morning worship. Over three-fourths of the church's board presidents had been female; and the men played only a supplemental role in the leadership activities of the church. Men's programming consisted entirely of a Thanksgiving program that a male member of the church did through another organization and a Men's Day that some even wanted to consolidate with Women's Day. The men seemed to be satisfied with supporting the different projects that their wives initiated. All other programming involved fundraisers, such as Family and Friends programs, that were primarily led by the women. In addition, there has been no significant leadership coming from the faith community within my context in a prophetic engaging manner. While I salute the hard-working, dedicated, and

firm support the women give to the church, I wondered where the men were. The areas that need attention in my context are many, but my project focused on those involving the truancy of males in civic activism everywhere but, in particular, the home, church and community. The program, then, planned to train a new generation of men and young boys to avoid the same errors. In short, my goal, through this initiative, was to encourage the men of the church to take on a more active role in home, church, and civic life. Put in the words of Nehemiah to “rebuild the walls,” meaning in this case, to pilot, promote, provide for, and protect their social units great and small.

One area of massive need that I noticed upon my moving to Mobile was the gross absence of prophetic involvement in the life of the community generally. Very few, if any clergy, attend civic meetings such as those of the school board, county commission, city council, and neighborhood associations. As a result, a huge void existed in the faith community and the city. The social action efforts of churches that had them were episodic, at best. Unfortunately, they passed through the agents of various campaign efforts, at worse, having to depend on the energy of those who were affiliated with candidates and were not self-sufficient. The church, therefore, had no independent prophetic voice that spoke to the issues of the people.

Research Model Outline: Hypothesis

The outline for my research became, in this way, apparent. Due to the extensive apathetic attitude towards civics and the laissez-faire approach to church attendance, action, and leadership by the members of St. Paul A.M.E. Church, especially the men, I hypothesized that by organizing males along the lines of Neh. 4:6 and Phil. 2:5, they

would be more active in the church and community and that the problems that existed could be reduced. These Scriptures gave a biblical foundation for the workshops, revival, Bible studies, and town hall meeting that took place throughout this project. Along with Scripture, I drew upon the heroes of antiquity and recent past, from the early Christian martyrs to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the timeless theological truths of Latin American and black liberation theology in my effort to disciple men and mentor young boys to be more prophetically engaged in civics.

Solution Statement

Implementing this grassroots, Scripturally-based intervention into the context of St. Paul A.M.E. Church and the Maysville community, I was that confident the socio-political atmosphere of my context would be positively impacted and, hopefully, permanently transformed. To my knowledge, this approach had not been tried on a consistent basis. The solution of my proposal would be such that the men of the church would take initiative to do more in their local place of worship and community.

Another solution I hoped to bring about would be that young men would acquire the requisite desire and knowledge in order to begin carving out a path whereby they could pursue a lifelong commitment to civic activism. Lastly, I sought to help both young and old males to maintain a high level of communal responsibility. These solutions were needed in order to create a more informed society where morality is key, the teaching of the Old Testament prophets and the love of Christ would be more evident in the public square, and men would no longer be detrimental bystanders in public affairs and would, instead, lead by example. The work could not have been completed without the efforts of

my professional and contextual associates. My contextual associates are Paul Richardson, Sr., Tenille Jamison, Tracy Hunter, Merrier Jackson, Robert L. Turner, Elijah Howard, Paula Reese, James Williams, Aurelia Thomas, and Sheretta Turner. The professional associates of my project are the Rev. Dr. W.E. Marshall, Dr. Carl Cunningham, and Dr. Jackie Gonner.

Research Design

I relied on evaluative tools both qualitative and quantitative in the experimentation phase of my project. Both of these carry individually their own value. The quantitative survey was designed to study a sample of the general population and use that to make claims about the whole. Under this method, the numeric descriptions proffered from the quantitative approach gave empirical data apropos to the selected population.¹

The qualitative survey was another method I found useful in conducting my experiment. It is best described as being the research that “involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.”² For example, under the qualitative approach open-ended questions were asked and interviews conducted.³ I, also, interviewed family members and friends of the participants to gain an objective view of their growth from

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009), 145.

² Ibid, 4.

³ Ibid, 15.

beginning of the project. Additionally, there was an observer who came into the sessions and wrote his observation. Lastly, of course there were the pre- and post-tests that were designed to decipher how much the males grew as a result of their participation in the project. In the pre- and post-test, one can see traces of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Because I relied on both the quantitative and qualitative research methods, my methodology is best characterized as a mixed-methods approach. Within this methodology, I took data from the both the qualitative and quantitative approaches and used them in triangulating my data for evaluation to ensure that I receive the most accurate depiction of my context. In the evaluation and discussion processes, I asked “both open- and closed-ended questions . . . [S]tatistical and text analysis”⁴ are given, as well. I triangulated the data from the interviews and the written evaluation with both closed- and open-ended questions, along with having an observer. The next section will explain how the data from the research design was used in my experiment.

Measurement

The triangulation of data from the mixed-methods approach was crucial in retrieving independent, objective input on my project. In measuring the growth of the participants, I had to rely on more than just my own personal observation. Instead, I needed some external data that came directly from the participants, their families, and the project’s observers. Everything they provided to me was used either to confirm or reject my own hypothesis concerning what my proposal would render.

⁴ Ibid.

Evaluating the participants was done in both the pre- and post-test. The purpose of this step was to ascertain what the subjects knew before they began and to contrast that to what they had obtained after the project concluded. My goal was that all of the participants' knowledge should have greatly increased as a direct result of their participation in my study. This data was used to analyze the effectiveness of the education and growth process designed in my proposal.

I sought to interview the family members because I believe in the value of personal observation in a relaxed environment. It is my informed opinion based on years in the pastoral ministry that individuals can hide their true identity to all except those who dwell with him or her every day in a personal intimate setting; those in the immediate surroundings of an individual normally receive a more refined view of who the person is. In order to ensure that growth was indeed occurring in the life of the participants as it relates to prophetic civic engagement and disciplining men and mentoring boys, I believed it efficacious to interview those closest to them: their immediate family or close friends.

The last measurement extended in my project is observation. Relying on pre- and post-test, and interviews of family members and friends of the participants is good but in order to truly get a full grasp, a third evaluative measurement is needed. That is the third party observation. Here one of my contextual associates gave an observation on the project as they saw it. The purpose of this particular evaluative tool is to establish the point that the workshops achieved the proper objectives for the proposal and that both the facilitator and the participants were fulfilling their purpose. In the next section you will see copies of the questionnaires, interviews, tests and agendas for programs.

Instrumentation

Pre-Test Survey

Now I will discuss in detail, the tools I used to measure the participants in my project. Each individual was given a pre-test survey. A full copy of it can be found in Appendix B. This survey was the first item I gave to the attendees. Within it, I posed questions that sought to gain both quantitative and qualitative data. Many of the questions were open ended. For example, some of them asked about the state of Christian-based leadership in their community, and what exactly did they know in regard to prophetic civic engagement. Overall, purpose of this instrumental tool was to show the initial knowledge the participants had as it relates to the subject matter of prophetic engagement. The directions informed the participants that their responses were anonymous and that no names needed to be included on the survey.

Post-Test Survey

The post-test survey had the exact same questions as the pre-test survey. It was given as the participants' summative assessment in order to gauge how much they had learned from the time spent within the project. A copy of it is found in Appendix C. Their identical format was intentional. As facilitator and their teacher, I wanted to see precisely whether there had been any cognitive improvement in the field of prophetic civic engagement from the participants' perspective. The lesson plans were prepared with the goal of ensuring comprehensive exposure to the topic. One effective way to test my

theory was to have the post-test mirror the pre-test. Here again, it was anonymous. In order to see whether the growth was due to the participants' time in my project, and not just a heightened community cultural awareness of civics or any other factor, I also invited others who were not a part of the project to take the post-test survey.

The post-test questions 1-5 and 9 were to be answered in the affirmative for a positive result. This was because, although the lessons expounded greatly on them, they were not meant to have one correct answer. Questions 6-8, 10, and 11, however, were. Consequently, items number 10, and 11 were meant to see how well the participants grasped the information during the session. Consequently, any response for questions 10 and 11 listed as average and above or moderately and higher is considered a positive response.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Introduction

In this chapter, I will seek to demonstrate the evidence of the field experience obtained throughout the implementation of my project. The information will be discussed in three sections: the collection of data, the analysis of data, and the outcome. Chapter Five will expound upon knowledge gained in Chapter Four, especially as it relates to methodology and instrumentation. By its end, Chapter Five will provide an accurate portrayal of events and data received from the actual implementation of my project.

Collection of Data

The field experiment was launched on February 24, 2013, and concluded on May 12, 2013. In the project, I relied upon seminars, Bible studies, sermons, a town hall meeting, and a revival in executing my initiative of equipping and disciplining adult men and mentoring young boys to be prophetically civically engaged in the Maysville community and St. Paul A.M.E. Church. I depend upon several evaluative tools, both qualitative and quantitative. The goal of this chapter is to present in detail my final project, findings, and outcomes.

Those who assisted me in this endeavor are my ten contextual associates namely, Paul Richardson, Sr., Tenille Jamison, Tracy Hunter, Merrier Jackson, Robert L. Turner, Elijah Howard, Paula Reese, James Williams, Aurelia Thomas and Sheretta Turner. Paul Richardson, Sr., is the president of the St. Paul Male Ministry. Br. Richardson is the one who helped get the men there on a regular basis so that we could have sessions. He was also the first president of the Sons of Allen at St. Paul. Tenille Jamison is an outreach coordinator with Goodwill Easter Seals, who was largely responsible for contacting the young men about becoming involved in my project. She also brought food to eat and arranged for the young men's transportation for the sessions. Tracy Hunter is the principal of Craighead Elementary School (the closest elementary school to St. Paul). Merrier Jackson is a principal of Mae Eanes Middle School (the closest middle school to St. Paul). These two principals helped me think through many of the ideas that I had concerning education and topics as it related to the session with young males.

Robert L. Turner is the state co-chairperson of the A.M.E. Church's Male Ministry for the 9th Episcopal District, Sons of Allen. The district encompasses the entire state of Alabama. He is, in full disclaimer, my dad. Mr. Turner also helped St. Paul establish its Sons of Allen chapter and made sure all was in order to be a chapter. Elijah Howard is a member of the St. Paul trustee board, St. Paul Sons of Allen, and director of the food ministry. He ensured that when we had food, it was in line with the health procedures of the church. Paula Reese works in the school system and is responsible for the federal pre-k program. She assisted me with my papers and in understanding better the issues in the community. James Williams is St. Paul Sons of Allen's treasurer and Steward Pro Tem. Mr. Williams sat in on several sessions and wrote his observations

during my project. Aurelia Thomas is the Pro Tem of the Trustee board and a retired magnet school teacher. She helped with use of the church facilities, ensuring that they were ready for use for each session. Sheretta Turner works with the Mobile Area Education Foundation as their career counselor. She is, again in full disclaimer, my wife. Mrs. Turner helped me to get an audience with high school dropouts in order to mentor them, and she assisted me in developing the graphs and charts herein.

The professional associates of my project are the Rev. Dr. W. E. Marshall, Dr. Carl Cunningham, and Dr. Jackie Gonner. The Rev. Dr. Marshall is a graduate of United Theological Seminary and a pastor in Mobile, Alabama. He was a great help to me throughout the program. I relied on his insight into the process because he had already gone through the program. He is also traveling to Dayton for my defense. Dr. Carl Cunningham specializes in mentoring. Because he is the GuideRight Director for Mobile Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi and the Co-Director for the International Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., he also could help me think through ideas for mentoring young males. Dr. Gonner specializes in healthcare and local grassroots clinics and outreach. She helped me think through my data and was a generous resource for my travels. I met with the project team approximately six times. In these meetings, we brainstormed the project idea. Dates were discussed for sessions, and we chose which young men who would attempt to mentor. As stated above, each of the members did extensive work on my project. I owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for the work they helped me to complete.

Prophetic civic engagement is a complex term that is not extremely common. In fact, most libraries I visited for information had little to no literary resources containing

that phrase. Some had information on “civic engagement, but none on “prophetic civic engagement.” Because of this, I structured my workshops around introducing the topic to the participants, showing them examples of it in the Bible, throughout subsequent history, and in modern times. Lastly, we were civilly engaged in a prophetic manner. The project was implemented in six components: sermons, workshops, Bible studies, a town hall meeting, a revival, and service learning projects. Each of these components can be transferable to any specific context.

The purpose of the Bible studies and workshops were to introduce the term “prophetic civic engagement,” along with highlighting examples of it through the lives of the 8th century prophets, Jesus Christ, the fathers of Christianity, and civil rights leaders. I started with three groups of adult men and two groups of teenage boys. In regard to the latter, I ended with just two because one group of teenagers had problems unrelated to my project, which demanded focus on rectifying their situation. This, in turn, eliminated time for extra-curricular activities, such as my program.

In achieving action-based research, I utilized a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative methods because it offered great latitude in developing the questionnaire, which, in turn, could increase the wealth of knowledge gained from the participants. Dr. Creswell defines mixed methodology as “an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms.”¹ Other scholars such as Davydd Greenwood of Cornell and Morten Levin of Norwegian University of Science and Technology support a mixed methodology approach stating, “We use both quantitative and qualitative methods ourselves, we reject the notion that AR is qualitative research

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009), 4.

only and argue that action researchers are obligated to be competent in all major forms of social research.”² Additionally, I have triangulated my data, receiving input from the participants, contextual associates, and family members and/or friends. For convenience, in this chapter, I have also provide the timeline, lesson plans, questionnaires, and interviews because I analyze, additionally, the data that was brought forth as a proximate cause from these research methods. Within this chapter, I will discuss, in narrative form, the events that transpired during the course of the project.

The project and timeline began February 8, 2013, as I met with all of my contextual associates to further plan the project. Then, on the launch date, February 24, 2013, the members of St. Paul A.M.E. Church heard me deliver a sermon entitled “Giving a Blessing.” This sermon discussed the need to actively engage positive reconstruction of the local community.

The next day, February 25, 2013, St. Paul hosted a town hall meeting for the members of the Maysville community. At this meeting, the district’s City Councilman C. J. Smalls was present along with several other clergy. The purpose of the Town Hall meeting was to discuss the new Family Dollar Development that was supposed to be placed on the block next to the church. Because I attended the zoning meeting and raised some concerns on behalf of the membership at St. Paul, on February 26, the zoning committee members directed the developers to have a town hall meeting in the community, specifically at the church so people could come themselves and raise their concerns. The meeting allowed local residents to hear from the development regarding their intentions for the community surrounding the store. Moreover, the citizens were

² Davydd J. Greenwood, and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 6.

One all-men revival, with over 300 hundred in attendance; eighteen men signed up to serve as leaders in the community

Two service projects, where the young men cleaned up their neighborhoods and the men cleaned up the church.

One sermon series, consisting of three sermons.

Analysis of Data

Two different people were interviewed as friends or family members of the participants. Their responses are:

Adult Family/Friend Responses

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

Young Men's Family/Friend Responses

Yes, they always asked about attending the workshop with Rev. Turner

Yes, they participated in the service project

Yes, especially for the young men who consulted with Rev. Turner on personal matters

N/A because they were not members of St. Paul A.M.E. Church

Yes

Not sure

Additionally, I had a contextual associate write up his observation of the sessions. His writings will be placed in the Appendix. Moreover for the Community Town Hall meeting I have a copy of the sign in sheet and for the All Men Revival over 50 men signed up to continue to be involved in helping their community. From that we met several times to discuss methods and ways for improvement. Ultimately, a non-profit was formed to better organize the work.

As you can tell, my pre- and post-test questions are identical. Also, they have a mixture of both open-ended and closed questions. They require both a narrative and a yes or no answer.

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Youth Post Test Results Part I:

Question	Yes	No	Present Correct/ Yes	Present Incorrect/N o	Total Present	% Correct	Absent Correct/ Yes
1	4	0	3	0	3	100	1
2	4	0	3	0	3	100	1
3	4	0	3	0	3	100	1
4	4	0	3	0	3	100	1
5	4	0	3	0	3	100	1
6	N/A	N/ A	3	0	3	100	0
7	N/A	N/ A	3	0	3	100	0
8	N/A	N/ A	2	1	3	66	0
9	4	0	3	0	3	100	1
10	N/N/2 A	A		1	3	66	0
11	N/A	N/ A	3	0	3	100	0

* “Absent” is defined as youth who did not attend required sessions

NA – not applicable

Youth Post Test Results Part II:

Question	Absent Incorrect /No	Total Absent	Percentage Correct	Correct/ Yes	Incorrect/ No	Total
1	0	1	100	4	0	4
2	0	1	100	4	0	4
3	0	1	100	4	0	4
4	0	1	100	4	0	4
5	0	1	100	4	0	4
6	1	1	0	3	1	4
7	1	1	0	3	1	4
8	1	1	0	2	2	4
9	0	1	100	4	0	4
10	1	1	0	2	2	4
11	1	1	0	3	1	4

* “Absent” is defined as youth who did not attend required sessions

NA – not applicable

Adult Post-Test Results Part I:

Question	Yes	No	Present Correct/Yes	Present Incorrect/No	Total Present	% Correct	Absent Correct/Yes
1	8	1	4	1	5	80	4
2	8	1	4	1	5	80	4
3	3	6	2	3	5	40	1
4	5	4	3	2	5	60	2
5	9	0	5	0	5	100	4
6	N/N/3 A	A		2	5	60	1
7	N/A	N/A	3	2	5	60	1
8	N/A	N/A	4	1	5	80	3
9	7	2	3	2	5	60	4
10	N/A	N/A	5	0	5	100	4
11	N/A	N/A	5	0	5	100	4

* “Absent” is defined as youth who did not attend required sessions

72 absent correct NA – not applicable

Adult Post-Test Results Part II:

Question	Absent Incorrect	Total Absent/No	% Correct	Correct/Yes	Incorrect/No	Total
1	0	4	100	8	1	9
2	0	4	100	8	1	9
3	3	4	25	3	6	9
4	2	4	50	5	4	9
5	0	4	100	9	0	9
6	3	4	25	4	5	9
7	3	4	25	4	5	9
8	1	4	75	7	2	9
9	0	4	100	7	2	9
10	0	4	100	9	0	9
11	0	4	100	9	0	9

* “Absent” is defined as youth who did not attend required sessions

72 absent correct NA – not applicable

Pre-Test Young Men

Question	Correct/Yes	Incorrect/No	Total Present	Percentage Correct
1	3	4	7	43
2	4	3	7	57
3	0	7	7	0
4	0	7	7	0
5	3	4	7	43
6	0	7	7	0
7	1	6	7	14
8	1	6	7	14
9	1	6	7	14
10	2	5	7	29
11	2	5	7	29

Pre-Test Older Church Men:

Question	Correct/Yes	Incorrect/No	Total Present	Percentage Correct
1	2	2	4	50
2	2	2	4	50
3	0	4	4	0
4	2	2	4	50
5	1	3	4	25
6	0	4	4	0
7	2	2	4	50
8	2	2	4	50
9	2	2	4	50
10	3	1	4	75
11	3	1	4	75

Outcome

Adult Males

Reviewing the data, I observe great improvement in the participants as compared against their pre and post-test. The number of men tested actually increased and the scores improved from a mean of forty-three to sixty-eight. This is an increase of twenty-five points in a five-week time span. Surprisingly, compared against those present during the session, those absent had an average of 72% correct versus the men who were present at the workshop whose post-test score average of 75%. I can explain this low improvement by examining the questions that the adult men got correct and incorrect. The men scored very poorly on the knowledge attainment questions such as numbers six and seven. Here, only 25% of the absent respondents answered correctly as opposed to 60% for those men who were present at the sessions. It is, therefore, safe to conclude many of the adult men thought that they could teach prophetic civic engagement while knowing little about what such engagement is, governmental processes, and the impact the government has on their daily lives.

The observations from the adult men's class showed me that the men grew personally, as well. They obtained new insights to the governmental process. The men better appreciated the link between Scripture and society. They now understand how Christians are supposed to help make the world a better place. The men learned the importance of having modern-day prophets to speak out for needs of the people.

Young men

The young men who participated had a much lower average correct answer score at 22% than the adult men in their pre-test. Their scores increased, however, by greater margins and had a higher percentage of correct answers than the adult men. The young men with Goodwill Easter Seals had an average score of 94%. This is an increase of 72%. The males absent had an average score of 55%. The data, therefore, shows that the young men benefited more from the sessions than did the adults.

The observations revealed that the young men grew to appreciate how government works. They also gained a greater awareness of individuals in the Bible and how they impacted their society. Lastly, the young men who were living in group homes appreciated having a positive male role model, who sincerely cared for their well-being, in their life.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflection

I joyfully reflect upon my project. Although, surely, improvements could, should, and will be made, which I will discuss later in this chapter, the overall experience of implementing my project in the context of St. Paul A.M.E. Church was very rewarding. To see adult men and young boys who gave of their time and talents and struggled through the concept of prophetic civic engagement on a regular basis was priceless. Seeing the vision of the Lord beginning to take place within my context was immeasurable.

The readings and assignments helped me tremendously in my preparation for the field experience. but I believe that nothing could have prepared me fully for everything the prophetic civic engagement project brought my way—from the unpredictability of people’s schedule to the complex questions of the young male participants and the public criticism by some in the community for my prophetic engagement. Historically, I can relate to those early soldiers of the faith, such as John Wesley, who were ridiculed and castigated by their contemporaries for their outspokenness and activism. Theologically, Cone was correct. When the participants saw how God identified with them in their personal individual plight, it made the Scriptures even more real and motivated both the

men, young and old, to be more involved in their community. My Old and New Testament texts were the inspiration for lesson plans and my timeline. The foundational and state of the art section gave me the practical information I relied upon in my discussions and civic interactions. All in all, without the preparation received from my mentors in the Doctorate in Ministry program and the books I read throughout my tenure, I feel I would have not been able to complete it. Now, however, with the experience I have gained in the field, I know I can do it again. I must declare honestly that not all of my assumptions were correct as it relates to the implementation of prophetic civic engagement. I learned as I went, and it worked out well. I have matured as a minister as a result of this process.

Needed Improvements to the Project

From my data, I learned a great deal about others and even more about myself. The data shows the men who participated in the project had a very high measure of growth as far as their knowledge base of prophetic civic engagement. There are, though, a few correctives that I would make in relation to the men. The first is practical but it would help: I would serve food at each meeting with the men. Food was not usually available. The particular session when it was produced one of our best discussions, and the following meeting had higher attendance numbers because, I presume, they thought food would be served. In contrast, the boys had food at their workshop because their sponsoring organization supplied it. Breaking bread together definitely helped to break the ice! Secondly, I would do a better job of marketing the program. Many other men would have liked to be included, but they were not informed. Thirdly, I would get the

men themselves to do the legwork for their community service project. Cleaning the church and grounds of the St. Paul was our project this time. It went well; but, were it not for the collaboration with other organizations, there would not been very many men present. Fourthly, I would have more town hall meetings. The meeting we put together to discuss the development of a Family Dollar store was packed wall-to-wall with people, who voiced their concerns. Fifthly, I would have the men assist me in the mentoring of the young boys, which I will discuss more below. Lastly, I should have used some of the books discussed in the State of Art section herein as a reading list for the men to help improve their knowledge base of the subject matter.

As far as my changes to the project in regard to the young men, there are several, as well. First, I would include more biblical references. I was hesitant because the young men came to me from a group home in the community, at which one of my contextual associates works. I did not know how much I could discuss the Word, but they had a strong desire for it. To my astonishment, the young men wanted to talk about the Bible and felt very comfortable speaking to me about the hardships, temptations, and pressures of their lives. Initially, I made the mistake of trying to over secularize the wording because I assumed they were “unchurched.” I was wrong and had to change my approach immediately. Secondly, I would take more outings with the young men. This idea not on my original timeline and arose spur of the moment. My contextual associate Mrs. Jamison made some arrangements so we could go to a baseball game, and the young men loved it. The time at the game was an excellent bonding moment, more of which would be most beneficial. All work and no play makes for a dull experience for young men. Thirdly, I would do better in researching the organizations with which I am partnering. I

had established a great connection with young men within a local Mobile educational foundation but, due to some internal issues where some of the children were caught cheating, my workshops with them had to come to an end. This resulted from the policy that all of the students, including my boys, had to retake some courses. Lastly, I would be more flexible with the community service project. The young men had a project in mind, which changed the plans I had made.

Restated Modified Final Project

Considering the changes I would make to the project, I would restate the project as a whole. Being guided by Neh. 4:6 and Phil. 2:5, I seek to disciple men prophetic civic engagement and encourage them to mentor to young boys using prophetic civic engagement as a guiding principle. This can be done by having a series of workshops/Bible studies (where food would be served), several community town hall meetings, bonding excursions, revivals, sermon series and community service projects. All of the curriculum of the workshops/Bible studies for the young men would be designed to focus more on Christian principles. Marketing would be done to attract a larger number of participants, and a suggested reading list given to the men at the beginning of the project in order to enhance discussion at the workshops.

Conclusion

I think more research should be done in the area of the spiritual thirst of young men. From my experience in this project, while it may not be as overt or look as traditional as in the past, the young men of today have a strong spiritual thirst. Their

appetite is, in my opinion, not being satisfied correctly because those who prejudice them irritate or cast away the young men before they can ever receive true assistance. They, therefore, get their longings assuaged by other less meaningful or helpful acts.

Implications

Prophetic civic engagement is a term about which, at the beginning of my project, very few people knew much; but, due to the tireless work of my contextual and professional associates, participants, and me, it is now gaining more traction. More importantly, the work of Christians involved in their communities is being seen in my context in new amounts and wholly new ways. I learned from this project that many young men need mentors. Also, I see that many adult men need to be encouraged to serve as mentors. As for the future implications in this field, the opportunities are endless. Personally due to the lack of research and practitioners in this field, particularly from a faith-based perspective, I have been offered numerous positions to aid different organizations. From my research on this project, I was contracted as a Program Officer for the Community Foundation of South Alabama to create a county-wide mentorship program for Mobile County called the Sankofa Project. I gathered potential mentors together and received funding for the project. Also, I have been asked to give workshops and seminars on establishing a mentorship program for several churches and faith-based non-profit organizations. More recently, the David Mathews Center for Civic Life employed me as their Assistant Program Director. In this position, I can further research into the various methods of civic engagement and host deliberative forums aimed at increasing the capacity of the public to actively participate in democracy while

maximizing the collective impact of and to the community. Furthermore, as a direct result of this project, I have been contracted by the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio, to be a consultant for them, in large part, because of my work in encouraging communities of faith to be agents of change or civically engaged in their communities, based on biblical prescriptions.

There is, as well, a massive void in community grassroots leadership that participants in prophetic civic engagement could fill. Politically, because of the work of prophetic engagement, I was the subject of an article in the local newspaper for standing up against Family Dollar, which would be open on Sunday right across from the church. Additionally, due to the large crowd at the Town Hall meeting, the residents, with the encouragement of the city councilman who was present at the meeting, decided to form a neighborhood community action organization. Lastly, two new foundations have been formed as a direct result of this project. One is called the Alliance, of which I am a founding board member. It seeks to help facilitate job training and economic opportunities for residents of the Maysville community and surrounding areas. The other is St. Paul Community Resource Foundation, where I am the chair of the board. We seek to increase the educational awareness, economic empowerment and the positive social impact of persons of goodwill in the Maysville community.

I have grown as a direct result of my involvement in the project. The data shows that the participants did, as well. No, everything did not go the way I planned it. I would have liked more participants, a larger number of men at civic meetings, and more males to serve as mentors—but I will not argue with the results. I know the project made a difference in the lives of all those who participated. Furthermore, the Maysville

Community and St. Paul A.M.E. church has benefitted enormously from the work. Men are now greater players in the leadership of the church and have markedly better attendance at worship service, Bible study and Sunday school. Anecdotally, on one particular Sunday, our presiding elder came and commented on how many young men we were baptizing: that day, we baptized four teenage males. There are still more societal reforms that need to be addressed in the context of St. Paul and even the issues surrounding the men are not fully resolved. I am just thankful to God that, right now at least, there is a transferable, replicable blueprint that seeks to address what was once thought a bleak and nearly unsolvable dilemma.

APPENDIX A
COMMUNITY TOWN HALL MEETING

To discuss changing zoning classification

1. Welcome: Rev. Robert R.A. Turner
2. Prayer: Rev. Robert E. Brown
3. Occasion: Rev. Robert Turner
4. Presentation: Developer
5. Question and Answer
6. Remarks: Councilman Smalls; Rev. Robert Turner
7. Adjournment

Note: Ground rules are no cursing, be respectful, speak only when acknowledged after raising your hand

APPENDIX B

PRE-TEST SURVEY FOR BOTH ADULT AND YOUNG MALES

PRE-TEST SURVEY

Directions: there are no right or wrong answers please answer these to the best of your ability

1. Yes or No: Does the Maysville or Mobile area have an effective, meaningful male leadership in the community?
2. Yes or No: As a whole, is there male leadership from a Christian perspective that impacts the lives of the community?
3. Yes or No: Do you regularly attend civic meetings such as city council, school board, zoning commission or county commission meetings?
4. Yes or No: Have you attended one such meeting in the last month?
5. Yes or No: Do you regularly go out and do community projects for this area?
6. What do you know about prophetic civic engagement?
7. What persons in the Bible have exemplified prophetic civic engagement?
8. What persons in history have exercised prophetic civic engagement?
9. Yes or No: Is prophetic civic engagement something you feel confident enough about to instruct others on it?
10. How knowledgeable are you on civic and governmental processes? (very, above average, average, below average, very poor)
11. How much does what the government does impact you? (very much, much, moderately, little, very little)

APPENDIX C

POST-TEST SURVEY FOR BOTH ADULT AND YOUNG MALES

POST-TEST SURVEY

Directions: there are no right or wrong answers please answer these to the best of your ability

1. Yes or No: Does the Maysville or Mobile area have an effective, meaningful male leadership in the community?
2. Yes or No: As a whole, is there male leadership from a Christian perspective that impacts the lives of the community?
3. Yes or No: Do you regularly attend civic meetings?
4. Yes or No: Have you attended one such meeting in the last few months?
5. Yes or No: Do you go out and do community projects for this area?
6. What do you know about prophetic civic engagement?
7. What persons in the Bible have exemplified prophetic civic engagement?
8. What persons in history have exercised prophetic civic engagement?
9. Yes or No: Is prophetic civic engagement something you feel confident enough about to instruct others on it?
10. How knowledgeable are you on civic and governmental processes? (very, above average, average, below average, very poor)
11. How much does what the government does impact you? (very much, much, moderately, little, very little)

APPENDIX D

POST-SEMINAR SURVEY FOR RELATED PERSONS

The Questions Asked to the Family Member or Close Friend Are as Follows

Dear family/friend of the participant. This survey is designed to determine the impact of the male Bible Study/Seminars have had on their life. Your sincere honesty is appreciated. Please answer yes or no.

1. Has there been a positive change in your family member/friend since he began attending the men's Bible Study?
2. Has there been a better sense of community awareness since he began attending the Male Bible Study/Seminars?
3. Has there been a deeper walk with God since the sessions began?
4. Has your loved become more involved in the church since the sessions?
5. Is there a greater concern for helping others?
6. Is there a greater understanding of the role government, politics and agencies play in the life citizens?

APPENDIX E

TIMELINE

February 8, 2013 Met with Contextual Associates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed meeting with contextual associates planning the project.
February 24, 2013 Launch Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sermon Topic: "Giving a Blessing"; Other Topic: The need to give back to community in service
February 25, 2013 Community Town Hall Meeting 6:00-8:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Met with the city council member for District 3, C.J. Smalls, along with contextual associates and developers for Family Dollar about zoning change.
March 9, 2013 Men's Bible Study Seminar 1 8:00-10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Prophetic Engagement Bible Study, Abraham ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Pre-Test Survey

March 9, 2013 Young male group 1 (Goodwill Easter Seals group home) Seminar 1 10:00-12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Introduction to Civics ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Pre-Test Survey
March 14, 2013 Young male group 2 (Mobile Area Education Foundation High School dropouts) Seminar 1 7:00-8:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Introduction to Civics ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Pre-Test Survey
March 23, 2013 Men's Bible Study Seminar 2 8:00-10:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Prophetic Engagement Bible Study, Moses ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Observations by contextual associate
March 23, 2013 Young Male Group 1 (Goodwill Easter Seals group home) Seminar 2 10:00am-12:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Prophetic Engagement Intro ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Observation by contextual associate
March 29, 2013 Men's Revival at St. Paul AME Church Sermon 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theme: Men in Service for the Community ▪ Nehemiah 4:6
April 13, 2013 Men's Bible Study Seminar 3 8:00-10:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Prophetic Engagement Bible Study, Joshua ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Survey to family/friends of men

April 13, 2013 Young Male Group 1 (Goodwill Easter Seals group home) Seminar 3 10:00am-12:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Prophetic Engagement Case Study: Joshua ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Observation by contextual associate
April 27, 2013 Men's Bible Study Seminar 4 8:00-10:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: Prophetic Engagement Bible Study Amos ▪ Presenter: Rev. Robert Turner ▪ Administer: Interest and needs questionnaire; develop day project with context associates
April 27, 2013 Young Male Group 1 (Goodwill Easter Seals, group home) Seminar 4 10:00am-12:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do Service Day Project ▪ Clean up Maysville community
April 28, 2013 Sermon 2 on Prophetic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: "The Mind of Christ"
May 5, 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service Day Project ▪ Sell plates to help church pay for repairs
May 11, 2013 Men's Bible Study Seminar 5 8:00-10:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administer: Post-Survey Questionnaire
May 11, 2013 Young Male Group 1 (Goodwill Easter Seals, group home) 10:00am-12:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend baseball game together ▪ Administer: Post-Survey Questionnaire
May 12, 2013 Sermon 3 on Prophetic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic: "Service for the Least"
May 11-15, 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect anonymous narratives from participants

APPENDIX F

AGENDAS FOR SEMINARS

Seminar 1 for Adult Male Discipleship

Prophetic Engagement Introduction Bible Study: Abraham

Give overview of the sessions

Administer Pre-Test

Objective: To teach the foundational aspects of prophetic civic engagement and how the story of Abraham going to rescue his nephew Lot from capture was an act of civic engagement.

1. Prophetic Civic Engagement definition: The prophet's commission lays upon him a direct measure of responsibility for the spiritual condition and fate of the people. Though set apart for his task and often forced to stand alone, the prophet in his/her approach speaks for people who are unable or will not acknowledge their spiritual necessity." Hence someone who is involved in prophetic civic engagement from a biblical foundational standpoint, attempts to serve as an advocate in the public square for those who are unable or not sufficiently aware enough to fight for themselves, while trying to enable and educate others to speak up as well. They speak truth to power, stand up for social justice, and the liberation of the oppressed. Isaiah 51 is a hallmark Old Testament text for them while Mathew 25 can be said to be one of their chief New Testament creeds. Needless to say at its core, all of the forth-telling, activism or initiatives from prophetic civic engagement which utilizes or interacts with governmental entities and/or the people as a whole should be based on the Holy Writ.
2. Bible Study: Abraham Genesis 14:5-16
 - a. What happened?
 - b. What did Abraham do?

- c. What was the result
- d. How can we do something similar today?
- e. Topic: Prison system, poor judicial rulings, unfair targeting, unadequate educational system

Seminar 1 for Young Male Mentorship

Prophetic Engagement Introduction Bible Study: Abraham

Give overview of the sessions

Administer Pre-Test

Objective: To get an idea of who they are and teach the foundational importance of civics to them.

1. Civic definition: The American Heritage Dictionary defines civics as “Of, pertaining to, or belonging to a city, to a citizen, or to citizenship/citizens;”
 - a. So what does civics include; anything pertaining to the citizens, and who are the citizens
 - b. What makes you a citizen?
 - i. Born on soil
 - ii. Have rights 14th Amendment
 - iii. Can exercise rights
 - iv. Citizens have a duty to exercise their rights our democracy depends on it
 - c. The study of civics is the study of things which involve the citizens/ community they live
 - d. A way in which a community of citizens manage themselves is called the government
 - e. How does the government impact you

Seminar 2 for Adult Male Discipleship

Men's Bible Study Agenda

March 23, 2013

Moses as a Prophetic Engager

1. Devotion
2. Read Scripture
3. Outline
 - a. Moses background
 - b. God Remembers His people Exodus 2:23-25: He hears those who call on Him
 - c. Moses commissioned by God Exodus 3:1:22: God sends out the prophets
 - d. God show Moses signs in Exodus 4; what in your hand
 - e. Moses approaches pharaoh Exodus 5:1; had courage
 - f. The people complained to Moses Exodus 5:20
 - g. Water to Blood, Plagues, Frogs, Lice, Boils, Livestock destroyed etc
 - h. The Passover instituted Exodus 12
 1. The Israelites freed but complaining, crossing the Red Seas Exodus 14: 1-14
4. Key Points
 - a. Moses had a negative past(murder)
 - b. God sent him back to Egypt to go deliver others

Seminar 2 for Young Male Mentorship

1. Review what is civic engagement
2. Discuss examples of prophetic civic engagers who engaged governmental leaders.
3. Contemporary perspective: Martin Luther King Jr.,
4. Historical perspective: Harriet Tubman aka “Black Moses”
5. Biblical perspective Moses

Seminar 3 for Adult Male Discipleship

3rd Session Prophetic Engagement for men

Joshua March on Jericho

1. Devotion
2. Scripture: Joshua 5:13-6-23
3. Reminder of what Prophetic Engagement means
4. Issue: Joshua needed to conquer the land so his people could flourish
 - a. Key points
 - i. Sought God first before engagement
 - ii. Followed God’s advice no matter how strange (marched around the walls)
 - iii. Remembered those who helped him.
 - b. Discussion

Seminar 3 for Young Male Mentorship

3rd Seminar for Young Males

Prophetic Engagement (Joshua marching)

1. Review
2. Marching or act of public protest

3. Discussion

- a. Why do people march (to bring attention to an issue in a non-violent manner etc.)
- b. When have people marched before, Civil Rights, origin Ghandi
- c. Earliest known case of marching for a cause

Seminar 4 for Adult Male Discipleship

4th Peer Session with Male Prophetic Discipleship

1. Devotion
2. Read scripture text Amos 5:24 (ESV) “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”
3. What is justice? the quality of being fair and reasonable
4. What is righteousness? The quality or state of being *righteous*; holiness; purity; uprightness; rectitude.
5. How do they relate with the analogy in the text
6. How can we uphold this scripture text today?
7. What are some civic interests you have?
8. What are some needs of the community?

Seminar 4 for Young Male Mentorship

4th Session for Male Mentorship

Goodwill Easter Seals

1. Give verse Amos 5:24 “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”
2. Explain concept of justice definition the quality of being fair and reasonable

3. Explain concept of righteousness; the quality or state of being *righteous*; holiness; purity; uprightness; rectitude.
4. How does that relate with water
5. How can we implement at least one of these concepts in our daily lives?
6. What are some areas of interest you have?
7. What are some needs in the community?

APPENDIX G
CONTEXTUAL ASSOCIATE OBSERVATIONS

[SEE NEXT PAGE]

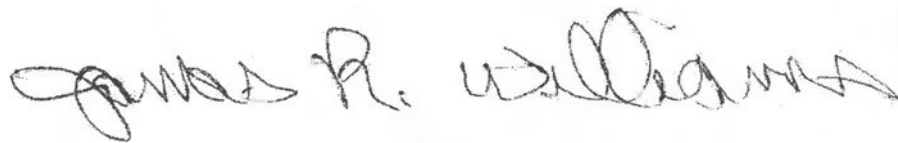
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TOPIC: Prophetic Civil Justice

Observations of topic as explained by Rev. Robert R. A. Turner

Study began with the scripture from Isaiah, chapter-61. Understanding that as God selects the person to bring his prophetic message to those in authority and to those with whom the Lord is sending his messenger to represent. God equips his messenger with the necessary tools to make his message heard in the public square. Understanding that the message may not be received well by those in authority and those the messenger was sent to represent.

A great example of God preparing is messenger is found in Exodus, chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. In all of God's infinite power he has the patience and wisdom to ensure his messenger that the Lord thy God is I AM and I AM goes with you.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "James R. Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Williams" clearly legible.

APPENDIX H
SIGN-IN SHEET

[SEE NEXT PAGE]

Sign In Sheet

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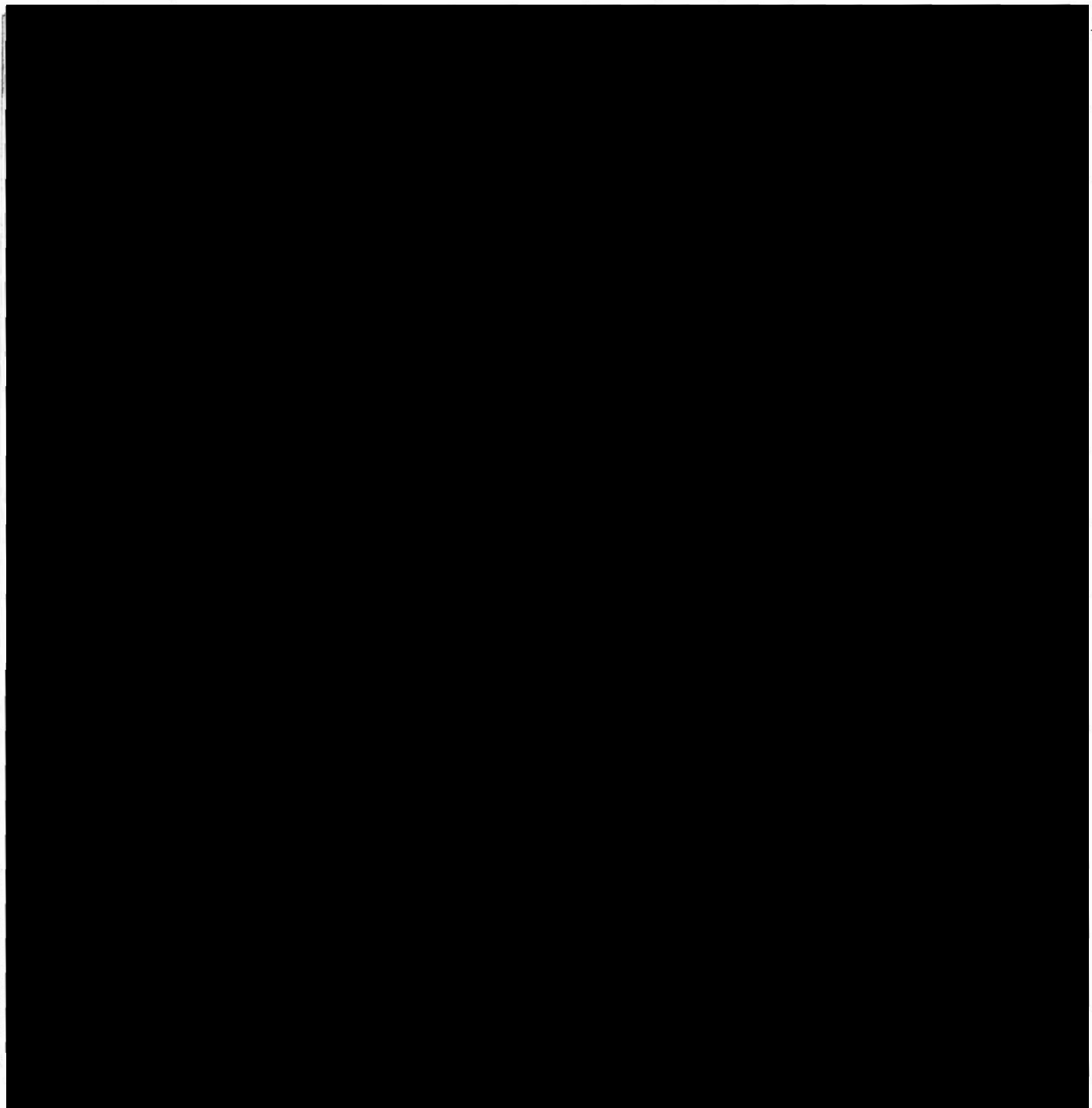
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APPENDIX I
REVIVAL: ORDER OF WORSHIP SERVICE

[SEE NEXT PAGE]

Williamson High School
All Class Reunion
August 8 - 11, 2013

For more information contact:
Deborah Calhoun @ 610-9006
Carolyn Irby @ 348-0003
James Williams @ 422-3463

2nd & 4th Sunday

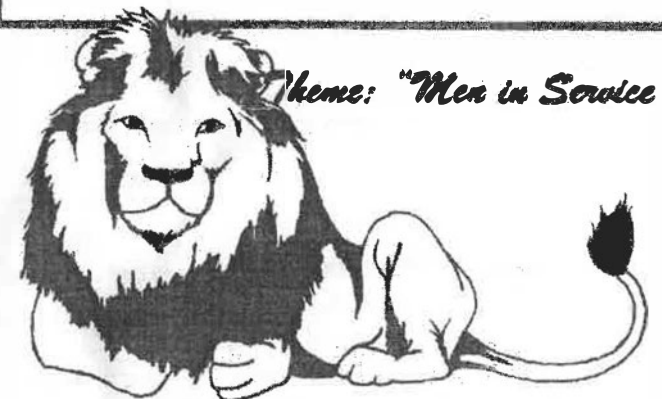
Clayton Meeting 4/1/2013
Revolution
6:00 P.M.



Williamson High School

1st Annual Men's Easter Revival Good Friday, March 29, 2013

Devotion: 6:30 p.m.
Church Service: 7:00 p.m.



Theme: "Men in Service"

St. Paul A. M. E. Church
1251-1255 Rev. A. T. Days Street
Mobile, Alabama 36605

Rev. Robert R. A. Turner, Pastor
Preacher of the Hour:
Rev. David Frazier, Pastor
Revelation Missionary Baptist Church

Good Friday Worship Service

Friday, March 29, 2013

7:00 p.m.

(Let the worshippers bow in silent prayer upon entering the sanctuary)

Devotion - 6:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.Deacons and Stewards of
Various Churches

Processional.....#390.....Pastor and Ministers
"I'm on The Battlefield for My Lord"

The Call to Worship.....Rev. Fredrick Watson, C/O 79

Leader: I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID TO ME, "LET US GO TO THE HOUSE
OF THE LORD!" OUR FEET SHALL STAND WITH YOUR GATES O
JERUSALEM!

**PEOPLE: FOR A DAY IN YOUR COURTS IS BETTER THAN A THOUSAND,
I HAD RATHER BE A DOORKEEPER IN THE HOUSE OF MY
GOD THAN TO DWELL IN THE TENTS OF WICKEDNESS.**

LEADER: BECAUSE OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, OUR GOD, I WILL SEEK
YOUR GOOD.

**PEOPLE: THOSE THAT BE PLANTED IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD,
SHALL FLOURISH IN THE COURTS OF OUR GOD.**

LEADER: BLESSED ARE THEY THAT DWELL IN YOUR HOUSE LORD, I HAVE
LOVED YOUR HABITATION, THE PLACE WHERE YOUR HONOR
DWELLS.

**PEOPLE: FOR THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE, LET ALL THE EARTH
KEEP SILENCE BEFORE HIM.**

LEADER: ET THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATION OF MY
HEART BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT, O LORD, MY STRENGTH
AND MY REDEEMER.

**ALL: O SING UNTO LORD A NEW SONG, FOR HE HAS DONE MARVEL
THINGS! MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD, ALL THE
EARTH AND SING PRAISES.**

The Call to Prayer.....Rev. Alphonso Hires, C/O 90

The Choral Response.....#612.....**"Hear Our Prayer O Lord"**

Introduction of Master of Ceremony.....Bro. Sam Lucky, C/O 65

Master of Ceremony.....Rev. Willie Perry, C/O 65
Pastor, St. Louis Street Baptist Church

Selection.....#221.....Williamson High School All Male Chorus
"How to Reach the Masses (Lift Him Up)"

Scriptures:
The Old Testament.....Rev. Larry Sullivan, C/O 75
The New Testament.....Rev. Fernando Smith, C/O 90

Candlelight Vigil.....Bro. Myron King, C/O 76
"In Loving Memory of all WHS Lions who are gone but not forgotten"

Solo.....Bro. Michael Green, C/O 74

Offering:
Bro. Wilbur Jones, C/O 68 Bro. Sam Parker, C/O 68
Bro. James Rankin, C/O 66 Bro. James Williams, C/O 64

Selections (A & B).....Williamson High School All Male Chorus

Introduction of "Preacher of the Hour".....Rev. Stanley McSwain, C/O 82

Hymn of Preparation
"Preacher of the Hour".....Rev. David Frazier, C/O 78
Pastor, Revelation Missionary Baptist Church

Invitation to Christian Discipleship.....Rev. Frank Porter, C/O 63

Invitational Hymn.....#513.....Choir and Congregation
"Time is Filled with Swift Transition (Hold To God's Hand)"

Remarks.....Bro. Ivory Kennedy, C/O 75
Program Organizer

Remarks.....Rev. Robert R. A. Turner
Pastor, St. Paul A. M. E. Church

Benediction

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